

THE
FINE LADY
A NOVEL *K*

By the AUTHOR of Miss MELMOTH.

"It is the first Part of Virtue to strengthen the Mind against
"the Attacks of Vice, and secure all the Avenues by which
"it might make its Approaches."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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THE

FINE LADY

A NOVEL

By the Author of "The Millstone"

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The Fine Lady.

LETTER I.

To Miss LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

Herbert-Hall, March 10.

YES! my dear Louisa, you are an extraordinary girl, not to express the least uneasiness on an occasion that would be thought sufficient cause of uneasiness to any one that possesses but a small share of vanity. To have at your time of life, a young creature of whom praise is lavish, introduced as a compe-

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titor

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erator in the glorious task of captivating the hearts of mankind, would not be thought so desirable a circumstance by many of the fair-sex I believe.

But you have no idea of extending your conquests you say. You will be contented to reign in the heart of one deserving man.—But where is he, Louisa?

—You have not yet, you tell me, found him. I think then you should endeavour to increase the number of your slaves, and, from the train, select the most worthy.

I know Menil is a favourite with your family; but you have strangely deceived me if he is one of yours.—No, Louisa, your time is not yet come.——

But, Harriet Denby,—When is she to take up her residence with you?—I hear she is *amazingly* handsome, and that that epithet suits her, as she captivates at first sight.—I am apprehensive she will not be found capable of friendship with her own

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own sex.—The adoration of the men generally engrosses those great beauties.—

She corresponds with Lady Fielding's youngest sister, who, in my mind, is extremely inferior in mental qualifications to her Ladyship. She is young, wild, and without sentiment.

I know not how it is; but I do not altogether like Miss Denby's becoming part of your family.—*Part of your family!*—What an idea does that convey!—Away with it.

It is not that I am fearful she will rival me in your's or any-one's affections.—Nor do I pretend to possess what the French call *presentment*.—But what then is it?—I know not.—Therefore it shall follow the idea it occasioned.—

I cannot keep it out of my head.—How ridiculous!—What business is it of mine?—Yet, I think, were I Miss Denby, I should not choose to come into a family on such circumstances.—Though you will

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say the fortune she will have, when of age, will prove the advantage on her side. —Possibly then your father wishes there may an union take place between this beautiful Harriet and your brother. —Don't you, Louisa, think he does? —It must be so. —He never else could think of bringing his ward home to his own house. She had many friends of her late father's.

Your brother, my dear, will not be proof against her charms, no obstacles can present themselves; — and Harriet, the lovely Harriet, will be but too happy in being your sister.

I think Charles Somerville the most animated frost-piece I ever beheld. —With all the glow of youth, health and spirits, he is ice itself. —In him, as in a fine clear frosty day, we are cheered by the sight of the sun, without being warmed by its beams.

While

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While he was with us last summer, I knew not what to make of him.—There is a tender politeness in all he says, but not a distinguishing one. He is equal to all.

He will address just the same civil things to every woman in company.—I declare he treated me in the same manner as he would his grandmother. You know few girls in the world are less vain than me, yet I was rather piqued at him sometimes.—But if he is indifferent, as a young fellow, to young girls, he is an exemplary brother.—You know your own happiness too well, Louisa, to need my expatiating on the subject.—Not a word, therefore, will I say farther, after I have assured you how sincerely I am

Your affectionate,

EMILY HERBERT.

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LETTER II.

To Miss HERBERT.

Berkeley-Square, March 13.

EMILY! my dear capricious girl, how very different is the style of your last letter from your former ones! Should you not rather felicitate one on the acquisition of a companion of my own sex, and age, than draw strange inferences, and alarm yourself with your fancied conclusions? What ails the beloved of my heart?

I promise myself great pleasure in the society of Miss Denby.—I want a female companion.—Too early deprived of the properest; the only happiness in my situation results from the tender, the more than common paternal love and attention of the best of fathers. My mother you know died when I was too young to retain

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tain any of those instructive lessons; she was undoubtedly qualified to inculcate: but my father happily was formed for the task he undertook; certainly the most laudable and pleasant in the world, the forming to virtue and honour the tender minds of the little innocents, to whom he had given a being!

True, Emily; Miss Denby has relations both on her father's and mother's side: but relations not suited to the education she has received, and the fortune she will possess. They are people who live altogether at a great distance from the metropolis, and strangers to the *beau monde*. Mr. Denby was willing his daughter should be acquainted with polite life, before she became a principal performer in it, as mistress of a family.

He had seen some instances of young girls, who had been brought up with almost a monastic seclusion from the world, launch into all its follies on the first en-

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trance into it: some instances of which had been fatal to the repose of their families. —

Where could he find so proper an asylum for youth and beauty as in the hospitable house of his old approved friend?

I wish much to see Miss Denby. She has, I find, many admirers, tho' none particularly distinguished by her.—Perhaps, as you humourously say of me, *her time is not yet come*.—Indeed I believe that to be the case with me. Does it not sound strange in this forward age, as it is called, that at nineteen I should say I have not yet seen the man, whom I could not so far prefer as ever to suppose I could like him to address me? But yet it is a veritable fact.

Mr. Menil is, as you say, a favourite, and worthy to be so, of my family.—You have long marked him as my lover.—He never appeared in that light to me; and though I allow him to be amiable, if he ever should, I shall be sorry.

The

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The simile you bestow on my brother diverted me. It should seem,—tho' you perhaps are not apprized of it,—as if he could not raise a genial warmth in the breasts of the fair. — Poor Charles! Well, but you allow him some merit however; his attachment to his sister must endear him to every worthy female heart.

You unhappily lost an amiable brother, tho' you was then too young to be sensible of such a blessing, yet I know his memory is precious to you. You experienced all that infantine fondness which his playful attention excited; but you were unacquainted with that sentiment which Charles and I feel for each other:—Our attachment is matured by reflection, and cemented by mutual obligation. My heart frequently aches and vents itself in sighs when I think on the dangerous path he has entered into. The fate of your unfortunate brother recurs to my recollection.

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General Harley was born a soldier.— His persuasion alone has induced my dear Charles to follow his steps in the field of glory, as my uncle always calls it. Indeed I am very sorry my uncle should have so much set his heart on Charles's being a foldier: tho' it fell in with his own inclination, otherwise I am convinced my brother would never have been directed by his interest; and that the reversionary expectation of the General's estate would not have been with him any object of incitement. —

We are in hourly expectation of the arrival of our amiable guest:—Every thing is in readiness for her reception.— I am impatient to see her; and you may depend on hearing my opinion of her, as far as I can judge from my first prepossessions. Adieu! therefore, for the present.

Now

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Now to perform my promise.—Yet the task is, by no means, an easy one; nor can it be complete. The exterior alone I can at present acquaint you with. If the face is an index of the mind, we need seek no farther to pronounce Miss Harriet Denby accomplished in every thing praise-worthy.

I wonder not at her having an admirer in every man who beholds her. Her form is the most strikingly-captivating you can imagine. Tall, elegant, easy, and genteel. Every gesture and look is accompanied with a something, which, though it awes, invites. Her eyes and hair are dark; the latter seemingly very thick, and shading a beautiful-formed forehead—the former piercing and tender. Her complexion the clearest brown.—In short, she is one “moving charm.”——I cannot find one fault in the casket; and I am secretly of opinion, the gem within will answer all my expectations.——

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A vain girl now, Emily, would be apprehensive of such a beautiful creature robbing her of some of her admirers.—I take no praise to myself that I am not so; as I am of opinion those faults are complexional, in a great measure, or wholly owing to the force of education.—I wish not for lovers.—I do not mean I would choose to live single, or that I would wish to marry, without being sensible of, and to, love; but I do not wish to engage the affections of the many.—To desire the esteem of all worthy persons is laudable, and shews an inclination to deserve it; but I make great distinctions between esteem and love, though I hope in me they will be united. I wish to engage the heart of some amiable man, on whom I can repose my happiness: and if I could choose, it should be one whom I had long known without feeling any other sentiment for him than esteem: he too should possess the same for me: personal attraction

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attraction would be then out of the question. Those attachments, where neither party is very lovely, are, I think, most likely to be productive of felicity.

But it grows late.—Pleasant dreams to my dear Emily! — All happiness attend you!——

LETTER III.

To Miss SOMERVILLE.

Herbert-Hall, March 17.

THANKS to my Louisa for the very early information of her amiable guest.—But your opinion alone, my dear girl, is not what I wanted. *You* are all gentleness and sweetness; you see beauties and perfections often where there are defects and faults;—witness your partiality to one Emily Herbert.—Your father, your brother, have seen more of the world than you have; men too are better judges

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judges of female qualifications than we are : from them you should have gathered your informations : from the out-lines you have drawn of the charming Harriet ; I should think, were you a man, you would be soon sensible of the *belle passion*. But is she indeed so lovely ? — So very captivating ? —

How sincerely I sympathize with you in your fears for your brother's safety ! — The military life is, by no means, in my opinion, to be wished for any one with whom one either is, or would like to be, connected.

Why did Charles choose it ? — Yes, Louisa ! the memory of my amiable brother will ever be precious to me. — How dear ought the remembrance be to me ! was not his fatal end the cause of my poor mother's death ? Ah ! what an impression, never to be effaced — nor can I wish it — did her dissolution make on the young heart of your Emily !

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In the last engagement in Germany, did the ill-fated Edward fall a victim to rapacious war!—

Led on to victory and conquest by his godfather, the amiable youth, just bursting into manhood—the delight, the admiration of his parents and friends,—fell—cut off by the cruel sword of the enemy.—Oh! Louisa!—But who can paint the situation of a parent?—the feelings of the tenderest of mothers on such a trying occasion?—

The evening before this cruel accident, the blooming hero wrote my mother a letter in the highest spirits—He ardently wished for the approaching morn:—too soon it came.—“He fought, he fell”—The evening beheld him a mangled corpse.—Distraction was the state of my wretched mother for some time.—My father, whose manly heart was rent with the keenest anguish, smothered his own to give some ease to the breast, so dear to him, which:

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which was so cruelly overwhelmed with grief.

How slow a death is a broken heart !
—My poor mother never smiled from that day—yet she combated her griefs ; she even strove to seek amusements ; but all in vain—The blow was struck too deep : and after four years of painful existence she met death as her greatest good.

Just ere the awful scene closed, which was to deprive your Emily of the tenderest of mothers, she beckoned me to her. Young, as I then was, my affliction bore the testimonies of reason and reflection. My mother had always strove to give me such instructions as should awaken and correct natural sensibility.

With a feeble voice and trembling accents : “ Emily,” cried she, “ we soon must part. Yes, dear as my child is to me, I leave her to seek one whose loss I can never help deploring. —

“ Per-

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“ Perhaps I am blameable. — I have
“ ever thought I was so, but had not
“ strength to conquer that fatal blow.—

“ O! Emily! if the memory of a tender
“ parent lives in your heart, hear, and
“ let my words sink deep.—I had not
“ power to resist the united persuasions
“ of Colonel L. and my poor unhappy
“ boy; your father too could not with-
“ hold his consent. in a fatal moment
“ *they* overcame *us*, and my approach-
“ ing death is the consequence.

“ I dread, lest my child, my Emily,
“ should ever feel those pangs which
“ snatches a mother from her.—Never,
“ Emily! a dying parent intreats it,
“ never give your hand to any one in the
“ army or navy, or suffer your tender
“ nature to be wrought on, to consent
“ to your children ever becoming
“ members of either of those dangerous
“ societies.—O! remember Emily, it is
“ the voice of your dying mother intreats
“ this

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“ this of you—and Heaven bless you !”

Ah ! my Louisa ! as your brother, as the brother of my beloved friend, may I not be allowed one sigh in regret that he has chosen so hazardous an employ ?—.

The recollection of the last moments of so respectable a friend and parent casts a gloom over my spirits I cannot shake off. I cannot divest myself of melancholy ideas ; but I can keep them to myself.

Adieu ! my amiable friend,

Your's for ever,

EMILY HERBERT.

L E T T E R IV.

To Miss BARBARA LASCELLES.

Berkeley-Square, March 21.

WELL, here, my dear Bab, I am arrived. What my presence will produce none knows :—at least I cannot tell.

Do.

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Do you really expect an accurate description of the family into which I am introduced?—cruel girl! what a laborious task have you assigned your giddy friend!—

Positively, Bab! you never were more woefully mistaken, than when you supposed I should be instantaneously whirled into the *beau monde* on my entrance into the Somerville family. No, no, we are quite one of your so-ber, se-date *sentimental* houses.

Mr. Somerville is a fine piece of antiquity: turned of sixty, with a fresh healthy complexion, and curling hair, like the snowy fleece. Lord, my dear! he did not marry till he was forty.—I really think his children look as if they sprung from an old stock.—I suppose *madame la femme* was pretty far advanced too.—He told us last night a long fiddle faddle story of their loves.—I thought I should have expired with the vapours:—
though,

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though, would you believe it, both the captain and Louisa melted into tears; so I managed my eyes in such a manner as to appear not far behind-hand, and came off vastly well.

Captain Somerville is about twenty-five, which is all the difference I can at present discover between him and his father. And yet, to do the fellow justice, he is handsome—has sense too.—But honestly, Bab, I did not perceive that my presence had that effect on him, which I have the satisfaction to find it has on most men; perhaps that may be the reason, I do not allow him so many perfections as I should otherwise.

Louisa Somerville I should hate, if she seemed at all sensible of her charms. She is rather above the middle size, tho' not so tall as I am. Her figure is the most intreating you can imagine.—She is too soft and delicate a great deal, I think. Her eyes, if she knew how to use

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use them, would be lovely indeed, and I should be tempted to tear them out. Her complexion is fair.—Her features—but what signifies my talking of her features, she is a poor inanimate thing, very well suited to make me shine with greater *eclat*.

I hope to meet with some of the beaux with whom I got acquainted at the Spa.—Montague I expect to see very soon. He so seriously intreated me to grant him permission to visit me in town, I could not refuse him. Who could? you will say.—Why true, Bab, he is a man worth looking after; and will do very well to strut about with by and by.

Louisa has, I believe, got a lover. She seems to be totally ignorant of it herself; so it would be no mortification to her were I to play off a refined piece of coquetry, and get him from her. I don't think I shall attempt it; tho' I love admiration to my soul. You have often
told

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told me I was born a coquet. In good truth, I believe I was; it is so natural to me to endeavour to gain hearts,—and when did I fail? yet mine has never felt the least alarm: and I hope it never will; for once part with your heart, and you bid adieu to power.—No, let such soft souls as Louisa love; mine was formed to hold mankind in chains, myself free as air.

Pray, have you had any more lectures from Lady Fielding? Her sage ladyship is a notable harrangue-monger. She would worry me to death.—I am amazed Lord Fielding behaves so well as he does.—I think you are very silly—(it is the only weak thing I ever discovered in you) for to bear with her lessons on moral rectitude, and the world's opinion, and such stuff.—I should give her an answer once for all, as would prevent all further documentation, if I was in your place.

To

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To-night we go to the play. Deuce take it, I have not yet laid aside my first mourning. I shall not be brilliant. Let me see, I will assume a delicate languor. A refined coquet will give the first impression, by creating esteem. My features shall to-night correspond with my habit: besides it is to the tragedy of Zara we are going.

I have got the same *friseur* I had at Spa. He dresses me divinely.—I am this instant going to put myself under his hands; then shall I fly to conquest.—

Adieu!

HARRIET DENBY.

LET.

LETTER V.

To Miss HERBERT.

Berkeley-Square, March 26.

WE have got quite into the gay world.—My father thinks it is necessary to give Miss Denby every public entertainment; and she seems to have a very high relish for them.—

Our house is crowded with beaux.—Wherever she goes, conquest seems to follow her footsteps.—She retains them all. Behaves to one with a laughing condescension; to another converses seriously; makes a third happy by employing him in some trifling commission,—a fourth—but there would be no end of enumerating her lovers, or mode of behaviour to them.—

You ended your last, my Emily! in a grave mood. I wonder not at it.—I
am

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am uneasy about Charles; but I must not say any thing. This approaching rupture with Spain fills my heart with anguish, and frequently my eyes with tears, when no one sees me. Yet the most domestic have their severe trials.— My father the other night, from talking of his old friend Mr. Denby, reverted back to former times. He gave us a detail, a melancholy one! with which both Charles and I were unacquainted. I will give it you in his own words.—

At the age of twenty-two I became acquainted with Miss Harley. The knowledge of her amiable qualities made a sensible impression on my heart; which, however, I endeavoured to conceal, as my circumstances at that time rendered all thoughts of uniting myself with her, vain. I was the youngest of three brothers; my fortune small, and her father only in possession of an employment under the government. Those people who

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have places are generally constrained to live up to their income ; so that a fortune for their children is scarcely to be expected.

I should have looked on the deficiency of Miss Harley in the article of money, as a fortunate circumstance, had I been blest with an estate, as I then could have given her a stronger proof of the disinterested love I bore her ; but at that time, though I restrained my lips from pouring out the raptures she inspired, my heart was torn with anguish from the concealment. Yet, while my tongue was silent, I gave her every testimony of my sincere attachment. I was unwilling to disclose the sentiments of my heart, as I held it highly dishonourable and ungenerous to seek to engage her affections only to make her miserable. My smothered passion I could endure ; but to involve her in distress, would have been greater wretch-

wretchedness than I could have supported.—

Hardly a day passed without my seeing her. Without design, I always found myself in her parties, and frequently at her side. She treated me with the most delicate unreserve.—Indeed she seemed to look on me in the light of a relation, for whom she bore a tender friendship.

About this time a change in the ministry produced a very disagreeable one in Mr. Harley's affairs; he was removed, his not being a patent-place, and another placed in his room. It was then the narrowness of my income gave me real pain. Mr. Harley's finances were exceedingly straitened. He had a large family to provide for, and very small means.

It was reported Mr. Harley was going to retire abroad. Distracted with the intelligence, I instantly formed the resolu-

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tion of confessing my passion for his lovely daughter, and imploring his permission to make her mine. I thought if her affection for me equalled mine, we should be happy, though not affluent.

My father, at the persuasion of an intimate friend, became surety for a gentleman, who had engaged in a scheme of great emolument, as was expected. The augmentation this would make to the younger childrens fortunes, inspired me with hopes, that I might possess enough to make life easy with my dear Charlotte. I approached my father. A melancholy, which sat upon his face, chilled me; yet I ventured to declare to him my long partiality for Miss Harley. He heard me out. When I had finished, he said to me, while the tears trembled in his eyes: “ My dear Charles, your declaration gives me infinite pain. Once
“ I should have received happiness from
“ it. I sought to make your fortunes
“ larger—

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“ larger—knowing my estate to be en-
“ tailed—by entering into Benson’s
“ scheme. O my son! my hopes are
“ blasted. Whether he is unfortunate,
“ or guilty, I and my children are un-
“ done by it.”

At any other time perhaps I might have supported the loss of fortune with greater calmness; but then I was deprived of all hope, and I gave myself up to lamentation and despair.

I strayed, without meaning to do so, to Mr. Harley’s house. When I found myself there; “ I will just see her, and
“ take a last farewell,” said I to myself. I found her in the parlour alone. “ There
“ is a strange similarity between our fa-
“ thers,” said she, hardly looking at me.
“ There is indeed;” returned I, taking her hand, and fixing my eyes upon her face, “ and is there not some between
“ their children?—You have been weep-

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“ing, Charlotte; I cannot bear to see
“you in tears.”

“No, no;” turning away her head,
and dashing off the starting tear with her
hand; “but if I have—your eyes are
“red too.”

“Mine have reason to flow. I am
“deprived of every joy I had fondly
“hoped I should have experienced.—O
“Charlotte!—But I dare not make you
“a partaker in my sorrows.”

“You need not; I already feel them.”

“Dear generous girl!—yet can I re-
“pay your tenderness, by making you
“wretched?—No, rather let me bury
“my misfortunes in oblivion.”

“O Charles! Charles!” cried she in
a tremulous voice, and her lovely face
covered with blushes, “I would rather
“share misfortune with you, than”—
She could not proceed.

I pressed her hand. It was some time
before I could speak. At last, “I dare
“not

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“not involve you in my distresses.—But

“oh! my lovely Charlotte, a separation

“from you will be worse than death.—

“Yet I must endure it.”—

“Then you have heard all,” said she.

“O Charles! think not lightly of me;

“but never till this fatal day did I know

“how very dear you were to me.”

“My adorable Charlotte, how blest

“does this soft confession make me!

“though we shall be poor, yet we shall

“be rich in love. Fortune may yet

“smile on us; but while I am possessed

“of your heart, I shall never repine.”

“To have been assured a week ago,

“that my tenderness was repaid, might

“have made me happy in the found; but

“now, Charles, it is too late.”

“Too late! my angel! what mean

“you?”

“O Somerville! I could not bear to

“see my father miserable. There was

“but one way to extricate him.—A fa-

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“crifice was to be made.—I am that sa-
 “crifice. Mr. Maynard had it in his
 “power to re-instate my father in his
 “office. He asked but one recompence.
 “A hard, a difficult recompence! But
 “could I, could I refuse my father?—
 “Pleading too for all his children.—He
 “knelt,—O Somerville! he knelt to me,
 “to save him from beggary. Distracted
 “at the sight, in all the agony of despair,
 “I threw myself on the floor by him,
 “and, almost deprived of sense and life,
 “devoted my hand to save my parent
 “from poverty and shame.—Yes, So-
 “merville, I yielded my hand.—My
 “promise is given, and to-morrow I be-
 “come the wife of Maynard.”

As all description falls infinitely short
 of my feelings, I will not attempt to give
 you an idea of what I suffered at this
 painful moment, since I am unequal to
 it.

We

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We took the most solemn leave of each other. She was afraid to ask me how I should dispose of myself. I had at that time no fixed plan; my thoughts were only to quit England, if possible, for ever. I could not bear to remain in a place, where I must see the most lovely and most adored of women miserable; which must undoubtedly be the state of the amiable Charlotte. Had there been the least prospect of her being happy, I could have borne the loss of her with philosophy; since her felicity and ease were ever dearer to me than my own: but with such a man as Maynard, it was not likely a woman of Charlotte's delicacy could taste even content. He sought, by the most ungenerous methods, a gratification, which charms like her's could not have inspired but in the breast of a sensualist. — Her lovely mind, fraught with every native virtue, was no object with him. He possessed but one passion; and, that

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the charmingly-refined Charlotte was to be sacrificed to that passion, planted the keenest daggers in my tortured breast.

I had a still harder task : I endeavoured to reconcile the lovely unfortunate to her destiny. I smothered my own grief, to strengthen the mind of the adored object of my soul.

A domestic of the family acquainted me, that, during the preparation of the ceremony, which was performed in her father's house, Miss Harley behaved with tolerable composure; but, when Mr. Harley took her hand in order to present it to her destined husband, a deadly paleness seized her, and she sunk on the ground. He said she was hardly in her senses the whole time of the service. Never was there a more melancholy wedding.—A sacrifice it might well be stiled ! Mrs. Harley was in tears the whole time. As soon as the unhappy Charlotte was the acknowledged wife of Maynard, her fa-

ther clasped her in his arms, and thanked her for restoring ease and affluence to his family.—Her brothers and sisters hung about her: her mother could not speak, but fell on her neck.

In her unhappy situation this scene was too much; faintings succeeded each other so frequently as made them apprehensive for her life. She continued ill for several days; but at last her good constitution, and her earnest endeavours recovered her. From that moment she resolved to act in such a manner by Mr. Maynard as to fulfil every duty of her station with seeming cheerfulness. If content was a stranger to her heart, she subdued her affections, and wore a smile on her countenance.

Maynard, if he possessed more than one passion, was influenced by vanity; Charlotte's person was formed to gratify it. He obliged her to dress superbly, and frequent every public place. His

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vanity was further flattered : he had been the most generous of men ; he had raised a family drooping in anguish ; the great, the worthy Mr. Maynard had made this family his own. He had conferred the highest obligations on those who notwithstanding they had paid the price of a daughter's happiness, were humbly thankful to him, and ever ready to make acknowledgements.

Soon, too soon he found the gratifications he sought. The delicate mind of Charlotte had no charms for him ; when her person became familiar to him, she became indifferent.

It would be both painful and needless to enumerate the many indignities his unhappy wife was made to suffer. Her parents became sensible of it too late ; and the sorrow, which the knowledge of her daughter's misery occasioned Mrs. Harley, preyed on her vitals like a slow poi-

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poison:—she sunk under the ills she could not remedy.—

I had left England on this fatal alliance; nor did I return to it, till after the deaths of my father and two elder brothers. It was then necessary I should again visit the scene of sorrow to look after my estate, which had received considerable augmentations from the deaths of some relations.

In order to make some alterations in a new purchase of one of my brothers in the country, I went thither.—The spot was rural and romantic. It suited the temper of my mind.—I resolved to make my chief residence there.—

One day, as I was strolling about my grounds in a musing, melancholy state, I heard the voices of two women. They seemed deep in discourse.—I rather sought to avoid them, but they came up to the place where I was. As the sounds approached, a sudden chillness seized me.

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I thought I could discover the well-known accents of my Charlotte. — I thought too her air the same—I was not deceived. — It was my Charlotte! The other lady took leave of her when at some distance from me. —

I could not now resist the opportunity of throwing myself in her way; yet was I fearful of alarming her by a too sudden appearance. I made some little noise. She turned her head. She knew me, instantly knew me. I saw her colour fade—I flew towards her, and clasping her in my arms, prevented her falling to the ground.

Grief had made a greater alteration in each, than ten years, the tedious space we had been separated. Think then what were my extacies while I pressed her to my bosom, which yet hardly beat, thro' excess of love and joy!

At that happy moment I forgot she was married, or at least the thought would

THE FINE LADY. 39

would not intrude to interrupt my blifs.

The dear Charlotte fixed her eyes on me with the utmoſt tenderneſs, while I ſeated her on a green bank, my arm in- folding her waift; the tears at laſt forced themſelves a paſſage. Softened at the melt- ing ſight, I preſſed both her hands in mine. — “Tell me! Oh! tell me, my “ lovely Charlotte, are you happy?” “At this dear moment,” answered ſhe, with bluſhes, “I think I am.—But, O “ Somerville! what have I not endured “ ſince laſt we parted!” “Forget it all, “ my angel! in theſe fond arms;” con- tinued I, claſping her ſtill cloſer to my boſom, and ſnatching a thouſand kiſſes; “ unhappineſs cannot reach you.”—The affrighted Charlotte ſtruggled from my embraces: “What means my Somer- “ ville? What means the beſt of men? “ Reflect what I am!” The guilty tranſ- port I had that inſtant felt, fled in a moment. I bluſhed with ſhame.—

“For-

40 THE FINE LADY.

“Forgive, Oh! most excellent and
“adored Charlotte, the wild fallies
“of ungoverned passion. Never, ne-
“ver more shall it offend you. But do
“not leave me yet;” for she was going;
“do not so soon deprive me of the only
“comfort I have tasted these many
“years.” “I cannot stay,” cried she, in
a voice almost suffocated by sighs and
tears: “Ah! do not prevent my going.
“I must, O Somerville! I must leave
“you!”—

“Meet me then here to-morrow. O
“Charlotte! Charlotte! If ever com-
“passion touched your heart, meet me
“to-morrow. Behold on his knees the
“man whose life has been embittered
“by the severest of all losses. Oh! do
“not add more to my misery! say but
“you will meet me.”

I still continued on my knees, with my
hands clasped and lifted up; my face
was bathed in tears. She stood looking
at

THE FINE LADY. 41

at me in all the dignity of sorrow. Her grief seemed to deprive her of words. She lifted up her hands and eyes to heaven; then turning, to give her last look at the most wretched of men, smote her breast, and hurried from me with incredible swiftness.—I had not power to rise, so overwhelmed was I in deep affliction. The hope, however, that I should again behold her, kept life within me. I know not how the time passed 'till the hour returned, which I thought would bless me with her presence. I was resolved to regulate my orders, so as to create not the least apprehension in her breast: I would not have injured her to have possessed the world's wealth; but I had alarmed her fears: I was determined therefore to be doubly cautious in our next interview.

What was my disappointment! what my anguish! when, instead of my Charlotte, I found this billet!

“ Were

“ Were I knowingly to admit you to
“ my presence, I should deservedly de-
“ prive myself of the protection inno-
“ cence claims.—O ! Somerville ! think
“ not I could readily renounce the sight
“ of you ? No ; the struggle has been
“ great. My tenderness occasions it.—
“ What but conscious innocence and in-
“ tegrity could have supported me thro’
“ this scene of woe ? Ah ! seek not to
“ deprive me of it. Should I meet you
“ [Ah ! we will meet no more !] I
“ know not what the fatal consequences
“ might prove. We might be both un-
“ done for ever ! Urge me not, dearest,
“ best of men, urge me not, to what it
“ would be adding anguish to anguish to
“ refuse. We must not meet.—If pos-
“ sible, we must not think of each other.
“ —I dare not trust you—I dare not
“ trust myself.”

In the first moment of despair I
formed the vile resolution of carrying her
off,

off, and forcibly making her mine: that thought quickly subsided, and, bursting into tears, I threw myself on the ground. What my cogitations were I hardly know; but keen remorse for my atrocious intention was amongst them.—

I then suddenly resolved to leave the country, and not, by my presence, disturb the repose (if yet she could taste it) of the woman I loved more than life. I put my determination in practice the next morning.

About three years from this time Heaven was pleased, in pity to our distresses, to take Maynard from the world. He left behind him a very large fortune; beside a settlement of a thousand a year, he bequeathed fifty thousand pounds to his widow, on the condition she would never marry me; if she did, that sum was to devolve on her brother, the present general Harley.

The

44 THE FINE LADY.

The circumstances of the will gave me no pain; nay, I was glad Harley was to be a gainer by my happiness.

My Charlotte gave a year to the memory of a husband who never deserved the least attention from her, and then blessed me with her hand. Heavens! what was my felicity in the possession of such virtue, goodness, beauty, and love! Too short-lived were my joys! Heaven could only make her happier than I wished, and endeavoured to make her! She is gone, my children! and life without her has been but a blank, which I wish filled up by death.

Is not this an affecting little narrative, Emily? Both Charles and myself testified our concern. Miss Denby too seemed moved with my father's detail. Poor man! I fear he spent but an indifferent night

THE FINE LADY. 45

night after thus (to use the expression) living over his distresses again.

We were last night at the play. Miss Denby I think never yet appeared to so much advantage. Mourning, I believe, is generally thought the most becoming dress. Her's I am sure was so to her. She attracted the eyes of the whole house; an attention which, by no means, displeased her.

A gentleman, one Mr. Montague, an acquaintance of Miss Denby's, at the Spa, was with us. She seemed the most agreeable, as well as the most favoured, of her admirers. Indeed the rest do not seem worthy of being stiled such in the same sentence with Mr. Montague.

His figure prepossessed me in his favour when I first saw him.—I think I will give you a description of his person.—Yet no; I do not know whether I will or not, 'till I am better acquainted with his mind. — Though I am wholly disengaged

46 THE FINE LADY.

gaged at present too. He is tall in the first place. — Pshaw! I cannot tell you now, for I am this instant called away.

Adieu, your's,

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

L E T T E R VI.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq.*

Park-Street, March 23.

I Call for your congratulations, Lenox; I am happily arrived in my native land; and, above all my hopes, received by the adorable Harriet with seeming pleasure.

I think her most elegibly situated. The family she is with calculated to make her all I wish her. I had the honour of dining with Miss Denby this day,

THE FINE LADY. 47

day, and the pleasure to find she is satisfied with Mr. Somerville's behaviour to her. He is the finest old man I ever saw. The instant I beheld him, the monk of Sterne's painting presented itself to my imagination. Such benevolence, such humility, such looks,—as if indeed he was “looking beyond this world.”—You, Lenox, would be in raptures with him. I mean to cultivate his acquaintance; and make no doubt that I shall reap great advantage from his conversation.

I was received as the lover of Miss Denby, with the utmost cordiality, and pressed to accept a general invitation. I need not tell you (who so well know my heart) what joy so flattering a reception gave me.

I find my charming girl surrounded with admirers; but they are of too insignificant a species of animals to give me
any

48 THE FINE LADY.

any other uneasiness than that they should, for a moment, think they entertain a woman whom I adore.

A passion for admiration—so natural to a beautiful woman—is, I think, the only foible Harriet is incident to; and that will subside whenever she truly loves: which time I hope I shall soon see.—I am at present highly distinguished by her.—Yes, Lenox! she will love me, and then she will be all and every thing my fond heart requires.

Her amiable companion too will contribute to render my Harriet perfect. Miss Somerville, without the least affectation or seeming consciousness, is a pattern of loveliness. Mild, as the opening morn, and, like that, suffused with blushes. The most luxuriant painter might in her find his fancy-drawn picture of innocence exemplified. Innocence void of simplicity, which whatever definition the linguist

THE FINE LADY. 49

guilt may put on it, to me seems always to imply a degree of ignorance.

She has the loveliest complexion you can conceive, a very favourite one of your's I know, so clear that there is a kind of pink under her skin; her hair is light-brown, smooth, and beautifully shining. A gentleman, who is by no means deficient in sense, though used to small talk, told her the other night, "that could Cupid see, he would certainly make prize of her hair to string his bow." The compliment was prettily turned; she received it with a gentle smile of complaisance, but did not seem at all more satisfied with herself for giving occasion for it. I own I was hurt to see a little cloud of chagrin for an instant preside over my Harriet's brow; but it vanished on his having the address to say something clever on the brilliancy of her eyes.

50 THE FINE LADY.

What would I give to be certain I possessed the heart of my lovely Harriet! but I will not despair.

Now tell me, Lenox, how your affair goes on; yet do not write if you can contrive to come to London. I cannot see what can prevent you: you know you can never make me more happy than putting it in my power to serve you.—Tax my friendship to the utmost; and let me have the satisfaction of obliging one so dear to

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER VII.

THE FINE LADY.

51

LETTER VII.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq.*

Park-Street, March 30.

I Daily gain ground with my charmer. I think I have reason to be satisfied with my situation; yet how do I languish to be put in possession of the loveliest creature nature ever gave birth to! O Lenox! with what extasy I devour her beauties with my eyes. It is not in nature to behold any other woman with the least particle of desire; as impossible is it to gaze on Harriet without kindling *such* as are hard to be suppressed.

O! that she loved with half my ardour, then would she, as soon as decency would permit, yield to my solicitations, and make me the happiest of mortals! But I must not expect so great a felicity 'till the

expiration of her mourning ; and her father has not been dead two months.

I have no patience with the herd of coxcombs, that keep fluttering around her. I wish her to convince them by her attention to me, that they are of no more consequence to her than they are to the rest of the world. I know she despises the silly fops that pour flattery into her ear ; but while she listens to them, she appears to encourage them, and creates an uneasiness in my breast, which, though it is not jealousy, still borders on discontent.

Her heart was wholly disengaged when I first became acquainted with her ; I am sure none of the foplings, that at present she flirts with, can make any impression on her ; therefore I have reason to hope.

At the time I declared my passion to her one day, as we were walking in the gardens at Spa, she assured me her heart was intirely free: “ You are at liberty,”

said

said she, "to become a candidate. I give
 "you permission to make yourself as
 "agreeable as possible; and I promise
 "you I will not be displeased with myself
 "if I should hereafter think you so. I ex-
 "tremely approve of your acknowledg-
 "ing your partiality to me rather than my
 "father; for that step would have effec-
 "tually destroyed any prejudice I might
 "have entertained in your favour, since
 "I am determined the man who gains me
 "shall owe the blessing to myself alone,
 "and not the interposition or even advice
 "of relations and friends."

The gentle disposition of the amiable
 Louisa will, I hope, qualify the some-
 times-too-great vivacity of Harriet. What
 a delicate sensibility has that sweet girl!
 I wish, Lenox, you were to see her. —
 How would you admire her! But I forgot
 you are far gone in the *belle passion* for
 the little Fanny Neville, and, like your
 friend, have no eyes for any other wo-

man; that is, eyes of love. I can see merit, and admire it; I can do no more; I can see faults in my charmer: I can see perfections in Miss Somerville, which I would give the universe my Harriet possessed.

I wish to the Lord her father had never carried her to the Spa. That was her first entrance into life. A first-rate beauty is every-where idolized; and, particularly at that place, a thousand fops fluttering about her, — each professing a passion they can form no idea of:—what charms are these to a young girl, who has always thought herself handsome; but never met any one before to tell her so? There the seeds of adulation were sown; but, I hope, when I here inspire her with a mutual flame, her desire of universal adoration will sink into the sole wish of being beloved by me. Then how great, how enviable will be my felicity, to be in possession of a woman, the delight,

light, the admiration of all the world!—
To know myself distinguished by such an
angelic creature, and to feel that I am
necessary to the happiness of almost a di-
vinity! O George! what a state will be
mine!

I want much to know your uncle's
sentiments in regard to your Fanny. I
think her a sweet, amiable little girl; and
heartily wish he may concur with your
inclinations, since you are determined I
shall not have the pleasure of being in-
strumental to your happiness. I hoped,
George, you knew me well enough to be
convinced that this world cannot afford
any felicity to me equal to that of having
it in my power to make those I love easy.
It is the highest honour to man to be ca-
pable, from inclination, to bestow happi-
ness; but it is almost to be a God to
have the power too. That inclination,
that power, your Montague has. Why

D 4.

will

will not my friend permit me to use both in his service ?

A great affair, after all, it would be for a man of eight thousand a-year clear, with a pretty sum in the funds, on the point too of marrying a woman with forty thousand pounds, to throw away six or seven hundred a-year :—And for what ? to make happy the friend of his bosom — the man he prefers to all the world—the faithful monitor, to whom he owes every sentiment of his heart that is praise-worthy. Dear Lenox ! deprive me not of so great a blessing ! If you refuse me, for the first time, in our long friendship, I shall be displeased with you ; but, trusting you will not, I will not say any more on that head * * * *

* • * * * *

I am charmed with Mr. Somerville. To the most solid sense he has joined a most perfect knowledge of mankind. In him we see “ a green old age” truly

ex-

THE FINE LADY. 57

exemplified. "It is the duty of every
"parent," said he, the other day, "to
"make his conversation and society with-
"in doors, such as may induce his chil-
"dren to find their happiness at home.
"How absurd would it have been in me,
"had I obeyed the first impulses of grief,
"after the death of the most amiable
"and tender of wives? I have lost
"every source of happiness," cried I, in
the anguish of my soul; "life is no longer
"desireable.—I will retire from a world
"which has no charm to withhold me."
"And what have your innocent children
"done," said reason, "that they must be
"left a prey to the wide unfeeling world?
"And where can the infants, cast off by
"their natural parent, hope to meet re-
"lief? Is it thus you fulfill the dying
"request of an adored wife?—Is it by
"retiring from the world a recluse, you
"mean to ratify the promise you made to
"the tenderest of mothers, that you,

58 THE FINE LADY.

“ would never permit them to feel their
 “ loss, by being yourself father and mo-
 “ ther both in one?—It was the voice of
 “ my beloved wife—of the fondest of
 “ mothers. —I obeyed it. From that
 “ moment the study of my childrens
 “ welfare has been my whole employ-
 “ ment and amusement; for I have ever
 “ found myself amply repaid by the
 “ many virtues they each possess, and
 “ their exemplary filial attention to me.
 “ It is my highest felicity, that I find my
 “ darlings never so happy as when they
 “ are at home, and in my company.
 “ Can I do too much for such children?
 “ —I sacrificed my natural grave dispo-
 “ sition, (though not so much natural, as
 “ acquired from a long acquaintance
 “ with misfortune, to which I had been
 “ so many years habituated, that it might
 “ be termed second nature) in order to
 “ give my children an air of the world.
 “ My house was ever open to any com-
 “ pany

“pany my son thought proper to intro-
 “duce. Virtues, like vices, beget each
 “other. My son had a good example.
 “He ever found me more ready to par-
 “don in him any little irregularity of
 “youth in him, than he was in himself.—

“I wish but to live to see my children
 “happily settled; I shall then with plea-
 “sure resign a being I hope not ill spent,
 “though for many years a prey to afflic-
 “tion. But, during my acquaintance
 “with mankind, I have found this max-
 “im infallible, that though religion and
 “virtue cannot exempt us from expe-
 “riencing the evils incident to human
 “nature, they alone will enable us to
 “bear those evils with firmness and re-
 “signation.”

How different, my dear Lenox, the con-
 duct of this amiable parent, from that of
 most of our age! Here we see piety and
 cheerful prudence leading unexperienced
 youth through labyrinths of life. Cap-

60 THE FINE LADY.

tain Somerville is a most worthy young man ; with such an example how can he be otherwise ?

How much does he owe to his father ? Had your's taken care of his temporal affairs, you, Lenox, might have been happy in the society of the woman of your choice. It is hard that you should be possessed of every merit but that which your extravagant ancestors have deprived you of, and that merit the most essential in this venal age.—

I am to attend the loveliest of women to Soho to-night. She has promised me the honour of her hand. You will, I know, excuse my scribbling any longer, since I must pay a compliment to her by decorating my person upon the occasion.

Ever your's,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LET-

THE FINE LADY. 61

LETTER VIII.

To HENRY MONTAGUE, *Esq;*

Oak-Hill, April 4.

HOW happy are you, Montague, both in will and power! while how wretched, how very wretched am I!

I hardly know how to write to you. Your letter found me overwhelmed in deep affliction. And when shall I be otherwise? Never can I be so, till the cause, the fatal cause is removed; and of that I have not the least consolatory prospect.

I informed my cruel uncle of my long partiality to the amiable Fanny: told him in how tender a manner her father, my approved friend and instructive tutor, bequeathed her to me. It signified nothing, however; she had no fortune, and instant renunciation should be the consequence, if I thought further of her.

Though

62 THE FINE LADY.

Though I knew, that to turn the current of a rapid stream would have been a less arduous task, yet I endeavoured to bring my uncle to reason. He would hear of none. Half broken-hearted, I repaired to Nelson's farm, where my beloved girl was lodged. She perceived the deep discontent that sat upon my features. She pressed to know the cause; my heart was too full to conceal its anguish from her.

"Lenox!" cried the dear girl, "I cannot bear to see your distress, and myself the cause. A fatal recompence did my poor father make you for the many favours you bestowed on him! I could bear any ills rather than see you unhappy; that indeed I find a task too hard."

I endeavoured to console her, though I myself stood in need of much consolation. I spent a night, such, as I think I should be the worst of men if I could
with

THE FINE LADY. 63

with my greatest enemy. The next day I found myself very feverish and indisposed; infomuch that I kept at home. On the third I went to Nelson's to inquire after my Fanny. Mrs. Nelson told me she was not at home, having left them early that morning, acquainting them that probably she might not return that night; so desired they would not wait beyond their usual hour.

Greatly alarmed at this account, so very strange, I made a thousand enquiries, but could learn no intelligence, except what added to my distraction.

Wholly unable to develop this mystery I returned home without forming any plan, though I was resolved to pursue my Fanny to the end of the world.

As I approached the house, my servant presented to me a letter; it was written by my Fanny! Eager I tore it open,—but what consolation, alas! did it afford me!

64 THE FINE LADY.

I will transcribe it for you ; miserable as the contents have rendered me I cannot part with the original.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq*;

IN what words shall I acquaint the most amiable of men, that he must lose the society of his Fanny, which he has so often told me, he preferred to the whole world, and at the same time convince him, that the privation is necessary?—

To you, my dear Lenox, I have obligations of the highest nature. I wish all the world were as sensible of them as I am. Yet still we must attend to appearances.

Conscious of the integrity of my own heart, and likewise amply convinced of the rectitude of your's, I remained satisfied. I looked on you in the light of every tender relation.—I was happy in

THE FINE LADY. 65

your company; and when alone, I endeavoured to improve my mind to make myself more agreeable to you.

I have however one fault to charge to my account: it is not my sensibility of your merit, or my partiality to it; but of my consenting to live on your bounty. Yes, Lenox! I have been supported by you.—I have been told so, with every aggravating circumstance. Censure, with her iron hand, has found the calm retreat you kindly procured for helpless innocence, and with her blackening tongue has fixed an indelible stain on unsuspecting virtue.

The cruel accuser should remain unknown to you, did I not apprehend your anger might fall on the innocent.

The Nelson's family are a good kind of people, and I am certain, would all in their power be of service to me. I have particularly experienced Mrs. Nelson's
ten-

66 THE FINE LADY.

tenderness to me: I am highly obliged to her, and intreat you to remember her.

Yet, as I before observed, we should attend to appearances; and without doubt the singularity of my situation, and several concurrent circumstances might, in the breast of prudence, create suspicion. Your frequent walks were watched; they always led one way.—You was seen to enter a neat little farmhouse: and from thence you was seen to proceed with a young female.—No, no, we must not blame the world. It will judge from appearances. It signifies not who are virtuous, while they are imprudent.

When we last parted, I felt an uneasiness I could hardly support. *You* never appeared in so amiable a light to me before, nor did *I* ever feel so strong an affection for you: I dare own it to you, Lenox; perhaps it may be the last time.

After a night spent in tears, I rose with my heart more depressed than ever.

A.

THE FINE LADY. 67

A weight on my spirits, which seemed to portend something dreadful, was too soon verified.

Mrs. Nelson came into my chamber, in a hurrying way; "Here is a gentleman, Madam, that wants to see you," "sadly, my lad says. I asked him, if he did not know Mr. Lenox? No," "said he, it is not the gentleman that comes every day to see Madam; but I believe it is the squire."

I desired Mrs. Nelson to shew the gentleman into the parlour, and to request the favour of his name. She returned, and told me the stranger would not tell her his name, but said he must see me directly. I went trembling, as I had some suspicions, who it must be: indeed who but your uncle could find me out?

I will not repeat to you all the conversation we had, as I would not add to your distress: O Lenox! too much have I occasioned you already! Should your
uncle

68 THE FINE LADY.

uncle on my account disinherit you, what a state of complete misery would be mine! He convinced me of the absolute necessity there was of my absenting myself from you. — From you, whom—but I must, I will refrain my pen.

I besought not his compassion for myself, but I implored it for the best of men: he will be your friend: he has ever been to you as a parent.—There was but one obstacle between his favour and you; it was in my power to remove that obstacle.—Think, you deserve the greatest sacrifices I can make; I have made but one: but that—yes, Lenox! I feel that is a hard one.

The path your uncle pointed out to me I find to be a necessary one, though very difficult. It is hard to be constrained to forego the only consolation we are desirous of tasting. That cruel task will be yours and mine.

Was

THE FINE LADY. 69

Was it not madness in us, the worst of madness ever to give up our souls to hope? Where could there be any?—Your father was imprudent; mine unfortunate: and the offspring of imprudence and misfortune must be poverty and misery. But still, my amiable Lenox, we will deserve to be otherwise. We will not only live to our own hearts, but we will give the world proof, that we have some merit. While impending fate hangs mournfully hovering over our heads, we will be strangers to each other.

You shall be enabled to give your word of honour to your uncle, that you know not whither I have retired: you shall likewise assure him, you will never unite yourself to me, till he either gives his consent, or I have a fortune on which we can live without it: all this, my dear Lenox, you may, you must faithfully promise: I have bound myself by the
strong-

70 THE FINE LADY.

strongest asseverations strictly to observe those conditions.

You will complain—you will repine—you will perhaps call me cruel.—Ah! call me not cruel, Lenox!—if you do, am I not cruel to myself? Lenox! dearest, best of men, I would die for you: I have done more; I have rendered myself miserable, by tearing myself from all the comfort this life had in store for me.

I have not a doubt of your constancy. Entertain not the least surmise, that any time, place or circumstance, can make any alteration in my sentiments for you.

Let me intreat you, by all you hold sacred, not to attempt seeing or finding me out. I must, I will,—I have sworn it, be concealed from you, till fortune smiles on us.

Be satisfied, that I will take care of myself for your sake. I will endeavour
to

THE FINE LADY. 71

to be happy, because I am sure you will be pleased if I am so.

I will indulge the idea, that we yet shall meet: happily we must meet, or we meet no more. I think, while there is the least prospect of hope, it is impious to despair: do not therefore give up *your hopes*. Your uncle may relent; and your forbearance on this occasion, may be the source of his kindness. While you continue your respectful attention to him, you will increase my esteem for you indeed, nothing can diminish that, but your endeavours to discover my retreat. I shall judge of your affection to me, by your acquiescence to our destiny. And believe me, while I swear never to be any other man's, that I never will be your's, if you make any such attempt.

I have not taken up this resolution lightly, therefore I cannot waver. Heaven grant us happier days, than have yet
fallen

fallen to the lot of the most amiable of
men, and his faithful, for ever faithful,

FRANCES NEVILLE.

O Montague! think how unhappy
is your friend! And what remote pe-
riod of time can see him otherwise?

Too well I know the inflexibility of my
uncle—too well I know the steadiness
of Fanny Neville, to risk either the kind-
ness of the one, or the anger of the other.

Curse on the pride of indigent family!
Because no one of my ancestors submitted
to trade, my soul disdained it. Had I
been placed out with some merchant,
I might by this time have improved my
small patrimony, and had it in my power
to have made happy the woman of my
affections, and been blest myself.

I have had some thoughts of soliciting
for a place under the government; but I
quickly rejected them. I cannot approve
of the present ministry: I cannot sell my
prin-

THE FINE LADY. 73

principles, though to gain my love. My stipend would be precarious too, as a resumption might be made in the next change, by one, whom this administration has displaced; and such a procedure would effectually cut off all my dependance on my uncle, as his sentiments in disfavour of the present measures he publicly avows. Time, time then must be my resource. On that alone must I build my hopes.

Yet what distresses may not my sweet Fanny endure, while far removed from love and me? How can she subsist on a bare five hundred pounds? It is true, both principal and interest have remained untouched for these two years; but what a small pittance is that in these dear times. Will she not be involved in difficulties? cruel reflection! And I shall not be present to relieve, or at least to share them with her.

74 THE FINE LADY.

My thanks are due to you, my dear Montague; but you see, were I inclined, I could not avail myself of your truly friendly offer. Should my Fanny take the resolution never to be mine, of what use would riches be to me? I should only feel the loss of her more keenly.

* * * * *

April 5.

I FIND myself much easier than I thought I could have been, while my affairs continued in this train.

But my ease results from my confidence in Fanny. I am convinced she will never deceive me. No; dear, amiable girl! she will live for her Lenox.

I suppose the affair next your heart will soon be accomplished. I feel the want of happiness so much in myself, that I am doubly anxious that you should be

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be in possession of what you esteem so essential to your's.

I extremely admire the family in which your angel is placed. Amiable father ! O Montague ! had mine indeed been such a one, I should have been happy.— But heaven rest his soul, he has deprived me of the means of being so.

Your's faithfully,

GEO. LENOX.

LETTER IX.

To Miss SOMERVILLE.

Herbert-Hall, April 7.

I Have this evening been so highly diverted, that late as it is I must give you an account of it.

You remember Kitty Dormer ; a pretty little lively girl, in our neighbourhood. About four years ago she was addressed

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by Mr. Lestock, whom you have often seen. He was very intimate in the family; old Dormer never being so happy, as when Lestock was with him.

It is not to be wondered, that Miss Dormer soon distinguished him, as he is very agreeable and bears the stamp of good humour in his countenance. She was just of an age too for a girl to be romantically in love; and so I really believe she was with Lestock.

He had the address to persuade—I will not say to draw her in—to correspond with him; since I suppose there wants little other inducement than beginning first, to incite a young creature of fifteen to engage in a course of letter-writing with a man of whom she has the highest opinion; and one too, who was the avowed favourite of the family, though he had never declared himself as her lover to her parents.

This

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This affair went on for some time. She condescended sometimes to meet her admirer in the garden, when her father and mother were absent. We pity a proceeding at one age, which we should condemn at another: her extreme youth, I think, might reasonably plead her excuse, since, in general, the baseness and perfidy of men must be gathered from experience.—

One day, Mr. and Mrs. Dormer, returning from a visit, and going into the garden, discovered in an arbour Mr. Lestock, sitting with their little Kitty. She was reclining her head tenderly on his shoulder, and his arm thrown round her neck. Enraged at the familiar attitudes of the lovers, Mrs. Dormer, who is something of a virago, flew at Mr. Lestock, and abused him handsomely, for his base intentions. He resolutely disavowed any criminal designs, but made known his long secret love for Miss Dor-

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mer. The old lady, however, continued her invective. Miss was sent into the house in tears, and after some very severe language on both sides, Mr. Lestock departed full of wrath.

Poor Kitty led a most dreadful life at home. No accommodation could be thought of. Mr. Lestock railed against the Dormers wherever he went, which effectually rendered all intercourse of the amicable kind fruitless.

Though they would not allow their daughter an affirmative, they yet permitted her to use a negative voice. She refused two exceeding good offers, and they complied with her denial; which certainly was to be placed to Lestock's account.

About eight months since, she became acquainted with a Mr. Vernon. A most amiable, sensible and accomplished man. He procured himself an introduction into the Dormer family. The
other

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other daughter being quite a child, his visits were naturally placed to Kitty's account.

Jealous at the visible pleasure Miss Dormer took in Mr. Vernon's company, Lestock could not conceal his real temper; for I cannot help thinking that open, careless good-humour is too frequently assumed by him, as well as many others. He scrupled not to say in all companies, how extremely ill he had been used by Miss Dormer: which, by the by, was false; she being an equal sufferer, though deserving it infinitely less. He was likewise base enough to say, he would expose her letters; and actually did shew them to a tattling, flirting, married woman of his acquaintance; and boasted too he had received every favour from Miss Dormer, but the last.

This news, by some means, reached the ear of Miss Dormer. Ill news travels post, while good news stays to bait.

The use she made of her knowledge was to drive the long-cherished image of so infamous a fellow from a heart too worthy of such an impression, and to listen to the genuine passion of the amiable Vernon.

Soon as she found Vernon had made a suitable impression in her bosom, she candidly and generously informed him of her late attachment; attended with every circumstance. He assured her, the knowledge of her heart, and his acquaintance with Lestock's character, left not a doubt in his breast concerning the validity of her assertions.

During this time Lestock was paying his devoirs to a young lady of larger fortune than Miss Dormer; and wanted much to hasten the match, that he might not appear to be deserted. Choosing rather to be thought a villain, than an unfortunate, rejected lover.

By

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By one of those whimsical accidents, which sometimes attend mortals, Miss Dormer and Miss Cornwall happened to be in company with each other. From a similitude of sentiment, they became mutually pleased and desirous of being better acquainted. Before they parted Miss Dormer discovered upon the chain of Miss Cornwall's watch the picture of Mr. Lestock. Her surprize brought on an *eclaircissement*. Miss Cornwall was charmed with the unjustly villified Miss Dormer, and no less happy at the timely discovery of the baseness of her lover.

She begged she might sometimes see Miss Dormer; but that their intercourse might be a total secret.

This day I was invited to a ball and concert, at Mr. Dormer's; the occasion, Mrs. Dormer's birth-day.

I was exceedingly surprized to see Mr. Lestock enter the room, handing in Miss Cornwall. But Miss Dormer whispered

me, "that, as all animosity had long
 "since ceased, it was unnecessary to wear
 "the appearance of it; and that it
 "would have looked very particular to
 "have left Mr. Lestock and his fair
 "partner out in a general invitation."

We were all the country assembled
 together, and made a brilliant appear-
 ance.

Kitty Dormer paid her several com-
 pliments with a very good grace; last of
 all she approached Mr. Lestock, with a
 firmness and resolution I did not think her
 capable of. "You have made it your
 "boast, Sir, I find," said she, with a
 look infinitely pleasing, and void of all
 resentment, "that I have granted you
 "every favour, but the last. You shall
 "no longer have cause to think yourself a
 "vain boaster; for in the presence of this
 "good company, I will grant you the
 "*last favour*: and here, Sir, it is," pre-
 senting him with an elegant silver-blond

fa-

favour. "You surely will not refuse
 "one, who could refuse you nothing.
 "But, Sir, as I always thought reason on
 "my side, when I was so liberal of my
 "favours, I will give you one now. I this
 "morning gave my hand to the man
 "whose eminent virtues won that heart,
 "which was too long a slave to the vilest
 "of human beings. However, Mr.
 "Lestock, I have no anger to you; on
 "the contrary, I ought, and do here,"
 making him a low curtsy, "thank you
 "sincerely for so soon discovering the de-
 "pravity of your heart and understand-
 "ing. You have at present only made
 "yourself contemptible; but you might
 "have made me miserable." Never did
 I see poor devil look as the crest-fallen
 Lestock appeared. The singularity of
 Kitty Dormer's addressing him had drawn
 us all round them; and Miss Cornwall,
 close at his elbow, encouraging Kitty by

nods and smiles, rendered his confusion greater.

“My dear Maria,” continued Kitty, taking Miss Cornwall’s hand with the utmost familiarity, “your swain looks *“a la mort.* What shall we do to raise his spirits? Will you favour us with a song?”

“With all my heart,” answered she, “I never was in higher spirits in my life. Where is the guittar?”

One was presented to her, on which she played inimitably. I forget the beginning of the song; but it was something about rather leading apes than trust such fools as kiss and tell.

She sang with so much pleasantry and humour as made it delightful to all but poor Lestock. “Why don’t you thank me for my song?” said she, laughingly, “What ails the man?” are you composing an Epithalamium on the auspicious nuptials of Mr. and Mrs. Ver-
“non?”

“non? Or, are you basely engendering
 “some fresh falsehoods? I But hope all
 “the world will soon know you as well as
 “this company does; and despise you as
 “much as I do.

“You see I am very candid, Sir; and
 “this sincerity to you would have you
 “prize, since, in this instance, *I* have
 “conferred on you my *last favour*.” She
 made a very genteel compliment to the
 bride-folks. We all joined in our con-
 gratulations, highly pleased to be at a
 wedding, and the just punishment of
 falsehood.

Mr. Vernon went up to the contempt-
 ible Lestock, saying, “Sir, by the earnest
 “entreaty of my wife, I take no notice
 “of any transactions between you and
 “Miss Dormer; but I would, as a friend,
 “advise you to be careful how you tra-
 “duce the character of Mrs. Vernon; if
 “you do, I shall call upon you in such a
 “manner as you may be able to answer,
 “though

“ though you now are dumb. But I
 “ wonder not at your silence ; truth and
 “ innocence will always prevail over false-
 “ hood and guilt.”

The music called us out to dance. And
 we passed a very pleasant evening. Les-
 tock slunk off presently.

How I enjoyed his double disappoint-
 ment ! I adore Miss Cornwall, and hope
 she will soon be rewarded with a man
 worthy of her.

I will finish my letter when I have had
 a little sleep ; but it was impossible to
 think of rest till I had given vent to my
 mirth. I cannot help laughing, though
 all alone, at the idea of the knight of the
 woeful countenance. Adieu !

—, April 8.

I HAVE just been making my father
 and grandmother laugh at my last night's
 amuse-

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amusement. The scheme was entirely Miss Cornwall's: she planned it immediately after her *rencountre* with Miss Dormer.

My dearest Louisa, I am afraid you will grow an idle dissipated girl: you do not write so often as you used to do.

I will not permit Harriet Denby to rob me of my friend. Let her be contented with gaining the hearts of the men. A propos, you said you would give me Montague's picture. I want much to know what sort of a man he is, since he seems *so much to your taste*.

Ah! I cannot write another word. A message from Mrs. Vernon.—I must attend them instantly. They are not going to storm Lestock's castle I hope. Adieu! dearest of all creatures!

EMILY HERBERT.

LETTER

L E T T E R X.

To GEORGE LENOX, Esq.

Park-Street, April 10.

NO, George, I do not find myself that happy fellow, the beginning of your letter bespeaks me. I do not think that I have both the will and the power to be so. As to the first, we never, any of us, feel any deficiency; but for the last, perhaps I am as distant as you are. Nay, you have a consolation which I do not possess. You know you are beloved, tenderly beloved, by the woman on whom your soul rests; but I, I, Lenox, cannot fathom the sentiments of my Harriet.—My!—Ah!—she may never be mine!

She seems so variable. So full of spirits.—So earnestly to seek after admiration. I was almost tempted the other
night

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night to wish she had no faults, or that I had no eyes to see them, since I adore her with them all.

I told you in my last I was going to Soho. Both my sisters promised they would be there; and I was to introduce them to Miss Denby. They came to town but two days before, otherwise they would have paid a visit in form.

I was a little vexed, for Lady Bentick made a mistake in the ladies. She addressed Miss Somerville for my intended. She is, however, very happy in extricating herself when involved in any such difficulty; and paid a very polite compliment to Miss Denby, though I thought she seemed to like Louisa best. I was likewise sorry on Miss Somerville's account; for what my sister said to her covered her with blushes. Those blushes of her's (which, by the bye, are the most becoming in the world, as they are one continued glow) have raised a flame in

Ned

Ned Bentick's bosom. He is an agreeable young fellow, and I wish he may succeed ; though I think hardly any man can merit her.

Lady Chester told me she should have selected Louisa out from a hundred to have been the woman of my heart. Only think how these good sisters of mine were mistaken in their calculations.—

But I was saying, some-how or other, I was not pleased. Harriet was universally admired. There is an irresistible something, which attracts the notice of every one. How eagerly she swallowed the involuntary compliments that her beauteous form exacted ! She was quite in her element ; trod in air. Ah ! that she loved me as your amiable Fanny loves you ! Why cannot I inspire as tender a passion ?

Sweet innocent Fanny ! she must, she shall, be your's. Half my estate would I freely give to unite her to you ; nay, more,

more, if my Harriet would be contented with the remainder, and live with love and me in the country. But that I fear she will never choose to do, as she seems to have an invincible dislike to retirement. She lives but in a crowd.

Yesterday, on Mr. Somerville's saying the fineness of the season would soon tempt him into the country, Harriet exclaimed; "Sure, Sir, you will not think
"of leaving the dear town till after the
"birth-day! What shall we do in the coun-
"try at a time when all the world is in
"London? Indeed I shall be extremely
"disappointed, if I have not an opportu-
"nity to pay my compliments to his
"Majesty."

"The compliments of little people," returned Mr. Somerville, "would be lost
"in a crowded drawing-room, my dear
"Miss Denby; while, in the country,
"I can testify my sincere joy on the birth-
"day of my king, by cheering the hearts
"of

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“ of two or three hundred of his industri-
 “ ous and useful subjects. The beauty
 “ and merit, which is overlooked or dis-
 “ regarded in the concourse, will be ad-
 “ mired and revered in peaceful retire-
 “ ment.”

I was hurt to see the displeasure Mr. Somerville's intentions gave Miss Denby. Would to God she had never come to this cursed bewitching town!

Upon my soul this is a very entertaining letter to your worship; filled with the faults of my mistress: but I am certain they all proceed from an unusual flow of animal spirits; and her not yet being sensible to the passion, “sweet passion of love.” No, no; her heart nor understanding is in fault.—I doat, I adore her, but refine too much to be happy.

April 11.

THIS morning, at Mr. Somerville's, I was seized with an unaccount-

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countable giddiness, attended with an acute pain in my head. The gentle Louisa perceived the alteration in my countenance instantly; and, in the sweetest trembling voice, eagerly asked me if I was not well. Before I could give an answer, she had procured me some drops.

Why was not Harriet as attentive? Why was it not her soft hand which bathed my beating temples? Dear amiable Louisa! Why has not Harriet thy sensibility?

How did it cut me to the heart to behold an indifferent person, pale as ashes, assiduously applying remedies, while the woman, who ought to be interested, took so trifling a notice of my indisposition! But Miss Somerville's is one of the divinest tempers I ever was acquainted with. If the meanest servant was ill, she would attend them with the utmost care. Nay, her compassion is extended to the whole creation. And, as Rousseau
says,

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says, it is not because a thing is human, but because it is sensible, that she would relieve it from pain.

How her mild eyes glistered when I assured her I was quite recovered! tho' she cast them down with blushes when I attributed it wholly to her care and attention.

I fancy Harriet is like some of us men, who only like those who can give them pleasure. Thank God, I have an excellent state of health, so shall not have much occasion for her abilities in the sick chamber. And I hope I shall have it in my power to make myself necessary to her by procuring her every pleasure.

Notwithstanding my assurances to my pretty doctress, I feel myself very queer, so shall finish my motley letter.

Sincerely your's,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

To Miss HERBERT.

Berkeley-Square, April 10.

THE other night Mr. Montague introduced Miss Denby to the acquaintance of his two sisters, Lady Bentick and Lady Chester. We were all at Cornely's.

Miss Denby, Mr. Montague, and your Louisa, had been there but a little time before the Ladies appeared. Mr. Montague left it to them to find out the Lady of his affections; and, to my utter confusion, Lady Bentick approached, and took my hand; saying, "How much am I obliged to you, Madam, for conveying so infinite a share of happiness to my brother, as is visible in his countenance." I felt myself strangely disconcerted by her Ladyship's mistake; and, blushing excessively, stammered out

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something, which however set her right. While Lady Bentick was talking to me, I observed Lady Chester was whispering to Mr. Bentick; who, in return, said, "If it is so, I am a lost man. "Never did I behold such beauteous innocence."

From Lady Bentick's error, Lady Chester took warning, and paid her first compliment to Miss Denby; but however addressed me in the politest terms.—Terms seemingly of friendship. They are both very amiable women. I was quite charmed with their manner. We were all very chatty and sociable presently. Though Miss Denby did not seem as if in high spirits, till the notice of the beaux around us inspired them.

Is it not strange, Emily, that a woman, who possesses the heart of a Montague, should sigh after other conquests? And yet that certainly is true in regard to Harriet Denby. A man so amiable,

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so different to all the men I have ever seen before ! — If happiness is ever the state of mortals, she must enjoy it with such a companion !

Mr. Bentick begged the honour of my hand for the evening. I did not refuse him, because he looked as if he would have been uneasy if I had. I had, however, not much pleasure in dancing. It is, you know, rather fatiguing in so crowded a place ; besides, my spirits were not very good.

I wish the time would approach for our leaving town. It will not be long first, I hope. I think my spirits, though never high, are always freer in the clear air of the country.

I go more in public than ever I did, in compliance with Miss Denby's taste ; who is passionately fond, — to use her own expression—of every place of diversion. Her notions of happiness consist in being for ever hurrying from one amuse-

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ment to another ; creating passions in the breasts of the men of the tender sort, and filling those of the women with envy. Yet, with all this levity, she has, I am sure, a thousand good qualities. Great command, I know, she has over herself. I think, did I love a man as Mr. Montague deserves to be loved, I could not conceal it as she does ; nor should I attempt it. I do not think the delicacy of our sex would permit us to betray a passion for a man one knew but little of ; but, when a man is so worthy, oh ! what pleasure would it be to confess ourselves sensible to his merit !

If 'tis joy to wound a lover,
 How much more to give him ease !
 When his passion we discover,
 Oh ! how pleasing 'tis to please !
 The bliss returns, and we receive
 Transports greater than we give.

You know this song so well, I might
 have spared myself the trouble of writing it.
 But

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But it is a favourite of mine; and I take pleasure in penning the sentiments of my heart.

MY dearest Emily's letter is this instant brought me. Nothing but the perusing that should stop the continuation of my pleasing task. — But I will soon resume my pen in answer to your's.

* * * * *

I admire the scheme practised by Mrs. Vernon, to whom I wish all happiness, and the lively Miss Cornwall. I wish every recreant knight was so served. I think it will make him careful how he boasts of favours again. I am vastly pleased, that for his ideal gratifications, he should receive real punishment.

Have I not sent you the picture of Mr. Montague? I thought I had drawn it for you long ago. Did I not tell you he had the finest complexion in the world

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(though truly masculine) and that his features were regular to the utmost symmetry?—But I will go and take a view of this picture, which hangs to Miss Denby's watch.

N O; I despair of the task.—I cannot do it justice. I will go and replace the watch, lest Miss Denby should wonder what is become of it. Smart is certainly one of the best miniature painters in the world. The likeness so exact—yet so little flattered.—Little ! It is not at all flattered. I think he has hardly done him justice.

I cannot look at Mr. Montague, tho' he is not in the least a bold man, for any time, so that I never discovered so many fine lines in his face as I do now.—Beautiful resemblance !—But I must replace thee.

Not

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Not just yet though. — I wonder if it would be possible to take a copy. — I then, you know, could send you the picture of a man *so much to my taste* as you say, Emily. — Of a man who, very soon, will become the husband of Miss Denby! May they be happy! — May you, my beloved Emily, likewise be so! Your's,

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XII.

To Miss BARBARY LASCELLES.

Berkeley-Square, April 14.

POSITIVELY that chit-faced girl Louisa has made a conquest. — A conquest too, when I was present. I never shall get a lover, while that dangle fellow is always at my elbow, and behaving in so particular a manner as makes the whole town believe we are solemnly united. I will not for ever have

him fastened to my hoop, I am determined. What! to be seen and admired, yet not to have the dear creatures breathe their soft passion, because an absurd mortal fancies my whole happiness consists in the thoughts of being one day his! No; I was formed to inspire love, and I will enjoy my triumph.

I cannot think what Bentick could see in Louisa; to be sure she is a good pretty innocent looking girl; but no life, no spirit, like my friend Bab and I.

I suppose he knew there could be no chance with me, so he turned his eyes away. — But why no chance? I am not fettered yet. — No, surely, I am my own mistress, and may choose whom I will.

Montague has a fine estate, but he has no title nor chance for any. Bentick is next heir to his Lordship, who has been married five years without his Lady's producing a child. A Countess is a desirable

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sirable acquisition; but Lord Bentick may live a long time.

I still am puzzled to divine the charm which touched the heart of Bentick.—She was without the aid of dress too. Only, in a white, lappelled, spotted, lutestring negligee. The simple girl has some very fine jewels, but she seldom wears them. At Soho she had only a pair of small pearldrop ear-rings, and one row of pearls round her neck. Her head slightly ornamented with a few pins. Oh! that I had laid aside my fables, how would I figure away!

I am most horridly provoked—old Somerville intends going into the odious country very soon: before the birthday. His reason is as absurd as himself and his whole family, I think. Well, absolutely, when I am married, I will never go into the country; that is, to our *old family mansion*. I have no objection to Bath, Tunbridge, Margate, &c. &c.

But my swain talks in raptures of the pleasures of retirement, and so forth.— I am always on the point of yawning whenever rural plans are laid out, tho' I restrain myself, lest I should have a lecture of an hour long from the grey-headed father, or his old-fashioned daughter.

I am the more vexed, because I shall have so little of your company if you can bring your scheme to bear. Dear Bab, use all your influence to get leave to come. I long to see you. Nobody here suits my animated genius. Montague grows as stupid as if he were already married; and I am almost as tired of him as if I was in the same predicament.

We go to night, for the first time, to Ranelagh. I promise myself great pleasure; though, I am told, it is not a place to shew one's-self to advantage; the lights being so improperly disposed. But what taste can one expect from an anti-

antiquated old fellow, grown dead to all sensations which youth and beauty inspire? No; Cornely! adorable Cornely! is the only person for elegance, magnificence, and pleasure! *Empress of the vast regions of taste!*

Did I tell you I have been introduced to Montague's sisters. One of them took Louisa for me. I was a little piqued, for I thought they took more notice of her, even after the mistake had been rectified, than they did of me. But I have no idea of people being familiar at first; I like to keep them at a certain distance. You know I am apt to create awe in my beholders. Indeed, for what are charms given a woman but to use her power?

I assure you I already enjoy in idea, the pleasure I shall take in your gay widow's and your company. We will make parties of our own; which will be agreeable enough to Louisa, since she is fond of retirement and soft soothing soli-

tude. Well, well, we will not interfere with her *sober* schemes, but partake pleasures more suitable to our taste.

I will finish my letter by giving you an account of my evening's amusement. Amused I must be, for I shall see, be seen, and admired: three things which must always give a fine woman pleasure.

April 15.

THE most enchanting evening in the world! Who do you think I have met with? Captain Hilton! our old acquaintance. And, what is still more delightful, found him in the character of a man of quality.

His eldest brother died some months since; and he has stepped into his title and estate. You can never imagine the advantage his star is to him. He was always a pretty fellow; and once, I think,

a favourite of your's. I too liked him extremely, though I but seldom saw him ; as my very prudent papa thought an half-pay red-coat not an eligible lover for his daughter.

But now, thank Heaven, I have no one's leave to ask, whether I shall choose this or that person for my acquaintance !

I knew him instantly ; but was under some little perturbation lest his Lordship should not recognize me ; as three years at our age makes sometimes a great difference. In order to obviate that difficulty, I dropped him a curtsey, and said, loud enough for him to hear me, to Miss Somerville, that somebody we saw was very much like my friend Bab Lascelles. This feint had the desired effect, and my Lord was immediately at my side ; which, by great good fortune, was vacated just before by the fidgetting Montague, who was speaking to somebody he met with.

I cannot repeat all the pretty soft things his Lordship uttered. But, among the rest, he told me how unfortunate he thought himself in finding me engaged to Mr. Montague. I assured him, both he and Mr. Montague were in an error, if they supposed me to be in that state. Why, said he, it is talked of in his family. I was going to tell him I thought they were very impertinent when Montague came up. I believe he was surprized to see his place supplied by so pretty a fellow; and took the first opportunity to ask who he was. "Lord Hilton, "an old acquaintance of my poor father's," answered I, with a sigh. "And, I fancy, "an admirer of Miss Lascelles." I beg your pardon, Bab, for giving him that title; but I perceive a suspicious kind of look in Montague's face; and, though I do not mind his being jealous, yet I must not lose him, 'till I am secure of his Lordship, or some one else in high life.

I am

I am, you know, a woman of the world, and will make the most of myself while in it.

I was the more pleased with Hilton, because he took so slight a notice of Louisa. He asked me who that baby-faced thing was that I had selected from my acquaintance for a foil; though it was altogether needless; for, like a diamond, I wanted none. Was not that clever?

Montague has made me monstrously mad sometimes by the attention he pays Louisa. I have no idea that a man, who is professedly my captive, should dare to be civil to any other woman. It is an affront offered to my power.

I gave Lord Hilton no reason to believe I should be mortally offended, if he should take it into his head to visit me; or at least contrive to get himself introduced to the Somerville family. I hope he

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he will, for he is a very charming fellow
I assure you.

Well, I must put an end to my epistle,
and go to sleep, that I may, in dreams,
behold my swain, and hear his soft melo-
dious voice breathe out the effect of my
charms on his wounded heart.

Adieu, dear Bab,

Your's, heartily,

HARRIET DENBY.

LETTER XIII.

To Miss DENBY.

Farm-Leigh, April 21.

IF you, my dear Harriet, was to see me
at this *present writing*, you would
think I had studied at my glass the coun-
tenance and features of an enraged Tyfi-
phone, rather than one of the Graces. I
was never half so provoked in my life,
be-

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because I never was half so much disappointed.

My darling scheme of coming to your dear metropolis is all over-blown. I am to thank my wise sister for setting my equally *wise* father against it. She did not think it was prudent for so young a girl to be trusted to the discretion of a gay young widow. Besides Captain Capel was an intimate acquaintance of Lady Bell Henley's; and it would certainly be extremely wrong to risk our becoming further acquainted with each other. — So Madam Wisdom thinks to prevent my seeing and conversing with the dear Capel when I have a mind to it: — But she will prove herself woefully mistaken.

I remonstrated and pouted, but it was all the same. — See what power an elder sister claims!

My dear Lady Bell is as angry as I am: she promised herself great pleasure in my company. Oh! what delightful schemes

schemes we had planned out ! By the bye I do not believe I should ever have returned to Farm-Leigh, but travelled a little farther northward. Nay, I will not answer for it, but I shall take such a trip, if my dear Captain should be importunate.

Out of humour as I was, I could hardly forbear laughing at Lady Bell's droll speeches to my father and Lady Fielding. You never heard any thing more smart in your life. You know she is quite à *belle esprit* in London. Nothing is clever but what falls from the lips of Lady Bell Henley. Then she is so intimately acquainted with the family. Says any thing to the greatest personage in it. She would have brought me into the company of people of the most exalted rank.

Who knows how we might have been distinguished?—for you were to have always been of our party.

In-

THE FINE LADY. 113

“ Indeed, my dear Bab,” said Lady *Formal* to me this morning, “ nothing
“ gives me greater pleasure than when
“ any scheme is proposed for your advan-
“ tage. If it had been proper for me to
“ go to London this spring, I should
“ have been the first to promote your go-
“ ing with me.”

“ So, because you cannot partake of
“ an amusement yourself, you will take
“ care to prevent *me* : I am much obliged
“ to your ladyship no doubt.”

“ Had your party been an eligible one,
“ Bab, I should not have wished you to
“ wait till I could have escorted you. But
“ you must pardon me, if I say I do not
“ like *your* friend, although she is my
“ Lord’s relation. She would be a very
“ dangerous companion for a girl of your
“ vivacity. Because she is a widow, she
“ esteems herself above censure ; but she
“ is mistaken : she is still a single woman,
“ and it behoves her to preserve her re-
“ putation,

“putation, even for her credit in this
 “world, if she looks no farther.” —

“And who dares asperse her fame? I
 “make no doubt she possesses as much
 “virtue as any of your prudent ma-
 “tron-like wives.

“I hope she does. But still she is an
 “improper guide for you. I should even
 “have been sorry to have entrusted Ca-
 “roline to her; though she has five times
 “your prudence and solidity.”

“It is a pity I am not blessed with your
 “ladyship’s profound wisdom and dis-
 “cretion: but since I have reaped every
 “advantage from it—that is, been dis-
 “appointed, through your means, of a
 “pleasure which I had a right to expect,
 “I desire I may not be tormented with
 “lectures of an age in length, only to
 “shew the importance of your judgment,
 “and the happiness of my good Lord of
 “Fielding in possessing so inestimable a
 “treasure.”

Lady

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Lady Bell just then came in, or all my admonitions would have failed to stop the volubility of her tongue.

My smart little widow rallied her gloriously; I left them, finding the dowager too hard for the matron. For she has a way of laughing argument out of the field, so amazingly, that poor prudence had no chance with her.

To make me amends, I am to be invited, I find, to spend part of the summer at Fielding-Place. But I will as soon be hanged as mope myself up in their odious moated old mansion:—listening to nothing but the “cawing of rooks” and the babbling of brooks.” Though, upon second thoughts, I do not know whether I will refuse them neither. I do not believe they wish I should accept their offer; if so, it would be plaguing them finely to go and teaze their hearts out.—O! they shall have enough of it I promise them.

I AM

I AM amazed, Denby, that you are not in love with Montague! Lady Bell declares he is the most desirable man she ever saw; for he not only is enchantingly handsome, but he has that *tout-en-semble* which is not to be described. But you have designs of a higher nature. I adore your spirit and ambition. I wish you may succeed with Lord Hilton. Call him my lover, if that will be of any service to you, you have my permission.

With what *chagrin* do I relinquish all prospects of my journey to London! Hang me, if I would not go off with Capel directly, but that I have hopes when you are married old square-toes will let me come to you. I think Capel a pretty fellow, and all that; and with whom one might be pleased very well, but I think I could do much better in
the

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the matrimonial world. He would still be my favourite though beyond all the men I ever saw. Perhaps his being so greatly disliked by my family may enhance his merit with me. Contradiction is the very essence of the sex; and I am sure I am a woman in that particular.

I think, had I your opportunities and your person, I would before this have set the town in flames: and that I make no doubt you would have done, had not it been reported you were soon to be married. Matrimony, as we make it now, is the only state of freedom. I long to shake off the shackles of "single blessedness," and parental restraint, and shine in the *beau-monde*. But I should shine but faintly with my little Capel, for his fortune is very small; and mine, God knows! what that would be, if I should marry without *papa's* consent. He gave Eliza ten thousand pounds, but then she married with his concurrence; and

and so would I too, if a lord was to offer, let him be as old and as ugly as Lord Ogleby.

IT is as I thought.—Lord Fielding has requested the favour of my company. I suppose I am to stay till her ladyship adds one more to her list of boobies: she has four already. Lord! I should go crazy to be always in the rabbit-way, like Mrs. Qualm-sick the curate's wife.

Lady Bell thanks Heaven she never was in danger of spoiling her shape. Though she declares, if she had been, she should not have been very careful of herself, in hopes to have soon got rid of her incumbrance.

Notwithstanding their wise heads, I shall contrive some means, by Lady Bell's help, sometimes to see my Adonis. How shall

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shall I rejoice that I shall over-reach them!

I think Louisa Somerville might be sent hither to Lady Fielding and Caroline Lascelles: what a stupid hum-drum set of souls! But what a glorious triumvirate could there be composed, of Lady Bell Henley, Harriet Denby, and Barbara Lascelles!

LETTER XIV.

To Miss HERBERT.

Berkeley-Square, May 2.

EMILY! your Louisa wishes for you. She wishes to be enlivened by your gay converse, or to be soothed by your love. I am not happy.—Ah! why am I not so?—Ungrateful, thankless Louisa! What cause hast thou to complain? Has not thy indulgent parent consented to thy desires, and refused the

the man thy heart rejected? Why then this weight of woe which seems to bend down thy once chearful soul?

Yes! my Emily, my dear father permitted me to reject Mr. Bentick. I allow him amiable, handsome, sensible; but what anguish seemed to seize me, when my father proposed him to me as a lover, whom he wished I might elect, unless I had any particular reason against it.

Ah! what reason could I give? I had *none* to give. Fear, astonishment and dread, of I knew not what, tied my tongue. Emily! my repugnance to the thoughts of marriage is inconceivable. How seldom do we find that state productive of the happiness we flatter ourselves we shall taste!

The many instances, that present themselves within these few years of unhappy marriages, must give a thinking mind pause. The frequent divorces, separations

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tions and indifferent husbands must have some cause. To what can this strange depravity be owing? Ah! let me not become a wife, 'till I meet with a man, for whom my tenderness may secure me from giving into indiscretions of any kind!

If a man and woman do not truly love each other, where can the prospect of felicity be in the married state? They may perhaps be equally amiable; yet, from a dissimilarity of sentiment, they may not experience happiness. It is necessary that a coincidence of opinions should subsist, to create the harmony of souls.

Good God! how can Mr. Montague expect to be happy with Miss Denby? No, Emily! it cannot be. Poor, ill-fated Montague! formed to inspire and give happiness, must thou not taste it?

How greatly am I obliged to him for his tender friendship! You cannot imagine, Emily, the soft soothing things

he said to me this morning, because he perceived a melancholy on my countenance. Amiable Montague, how I pity thee!

So full of levity—so desirous of admiration,—so inattentive to his tenderness—so regardless of his sufferings:—Ah! how little does she merit such a man?

She seemed quite out of humour, because Mr. Bentick professed a passion for me. Silly girl! did she but know the uneasiness his profession caused me, she need not to have been displeased. But she cannot bear to have any woman taken notice of in her presence. One of her quarrels to Montague, I believe, is because he behaves to me with a polite friendliness. Can she refuse me the bare friendship of an amiable man?—She could never have formed a connexion with any person who could suit her bet-

ter;

ter; since no one so little covets the praises of the men as I do.

The greatest pleasure I have known for some time resulted from the behaviour of Lady Bentick and Lady Chester. They have treated me in the most obliging manner. I am sorry Mr. Bentick should have distinguished me as the woman of his choice, as it will prevent my inclination of going now and then to her Ladyship, as I have done frequently since the commencement of our acquaintance. Lord Bentick is a very agreeable, sensible man, and deservedly beloved by his amiable wife. Lady Chester lost her husband three years ago, who left her with two beautiful children; a boy and a girl. Lady Charlotte Chester, about four years old, is the sweetest little angel you ever saw. Lady Bentick, who is extravagantly fond of her, has no children.

These two agreeable sisters seem by no means favourites of Miss Denby. Nor

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do they, I believe, see so many perfections in her as their brother does. She does not even pay them that deference their merit and rank claim; abstracted from their being so nearly related to the man she means to make her husband. But she is blind to merit, her own interest and happiness.

I find Mr. Montague was uneasy some time since about Charles. How natural is it to imagine every body sees with our eyes! But my brother satisfied his doubts. He did not tell me how he *satisfied his doubts*: I think Charles is rather mysterious in that particular. How could he convince him he did not love Miss Denby, without affronting Mr. Montague's choice, or confessing that he was more sensible of the charms of some other? I wish Charles was more explicit to his sister; but if he should expect secret for secret, I should be oftentimes puzzled

puzzled to explain to him the reason why
I sometimes look dull.

O Emily ! how different I am from what
I used to be ! I know not what ails me.
—Sleep has fled from my eye-lids, and
all joy seems a stranger to my heart.

I strive to appear chearful in company.
I endeavour to make myself entertaining.
—Formerly I was thought to be so. I
find myself imperceptibly grown languid
and melancholy.—I search for the cause :
—I cannot find one—and I am displeas-
ed with myself.

This afternoon I was extremely discon-
certed by something Lady Bentick said
to me.—I dare not reflect upon it.—Ah !
how dissatisfied with herself is

Your

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XV.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq;*

May 2.

NEXT week is fixed for the removal of the Somerville family to Woodley-Park, for the summer-season.

I have received the most pressing invitation from Mr. Somerville to spend some time with them. I shall certainly accept his offer, as I choose to be near my Harriet as much as possible. It will at least keep some of the flattering tribe from her.

I wish my sisters were as heartily attached to her, as I am. I should be very unhappy, if they did not love my wife for her own sake, as well as out of respect to me. There only seems to subsist a polite distant civility, but very little of friendship. They are both extremely taken with the gentle Louisa, as

I

I sometimes call her. Indeed she is a most amiable girl. I never saw any one so little desirous of displaying her many perfections.—She sings like an angel; which I did not find out till the other day. Harriet had been singing. Benthick pressed Miss Somerville to favour us. Her refusal evidently proceeded from her innate modesty and diffidence.

At last she said, “If Miss Denby would be so kind as to sing an upper part, she would endeavour to accompany her.” Her brother named the song; —“When first I saw thee graceful move.” I could not have imagined any voice so harmonious as her’s. In how touching a stile she sung!

You know it is a pretty soft flowing air. I could not keep my eyes from her.—Her’s were fixed on the book, as Harriet was playing. When she came to the last part, in repeating the lines; “And though you cannot love again, In

“pity, ah! forbear to hate;” she lifted up her mild blue eyes, and, perceiving our ardent gazes, blushed and hesitated in so pretty a manner, that I thought she never looked half so well, or that it was possible the song could be better performed.

Bentick, though a very amiable fellow, could not succeed. He says, she refused him in such sweet accents and words, that the acceptance of the finest woman in the world could never give him half the emotion. He is more in love with her than ever; though he is determined never again to give her the slightest intimation of his passion, lest he should create her any uneasiness. We have seen him several times since; but she behaves to him in so proper a way as is hardly to be described; and few women would be able to imitate. Her whole behaviour is a pattern worthy of being followed:—so unassuming—so attentive.—

Such

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Such earnest endeavours to oblige.—
Such humility—such softness.—She is,
in a word, a truly amiable girl.

My dear Harriet is in the dumps at the thoughts of quitting town; but as she was never in the country with so agreeable a family, I hope she will be better pleased with it, than she at present thinks she shall. Besides, she will have a faithful lover at her side, who will point out to her view the many beauties of the prospect in the rural scenes around us, and from the blooming fragrance of the flowers, advert to the animated beauties of my lovely companion.

You are right in your conjectures; I was a little uneasy, when you saw me, about Charles Somerville. I always like to come to explanations with people; so I had a short conversation with him, concerning my fair one. “He assured me
“he was so far from being displeased,

"that he honoured me for my ingenuity ;
 "but that he had long been secretly at-
 "tached to a young lady, which, but
 "for some unavoidable obstacles, he
 "should have declared. He hoped I
 "would not require the lady's name,
 "since he had never disclosed his par-
 "tiality to any one, and hardly dared
 "to whisper it to himself."

"I told him I should think myself
 "singularly fortunate, if I could ever be
 "of service to him."

"He thanked me ; but added with a
 "sigh, you cannot assist me ; the voice
 "of the dead is against me."

I think we have no right to pry into
 the secrets of an open and ingenuous
 heart, it is taxing their generosity unjust-
 ly : I therefore have never hinted the
 least curiosity since, but revere his pas-
 sion, which conceals itself from the object,
 and which I make no doubt is worthy of
 him.

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him. I should however like to know, how the voice of the dead is against him.

I wish I could have spent a week with you, as I promised; but fear it will not be in my power till after my return from Woodley-park.

You did not give me your opinion freely of my lovely girl. I wish to know your sentiments of her. I hitherto have done nothing of moment, without your advice and concurrence; I hope you will not refuse it in the most important article in life.

What an artful little gypsey is your Fanny, to conceal herself so effectually from you, and yet to have wrote twice! Her banker is an excellent secret-keeper. I think you are to be commended for your prudence; but, by Heaven! I should have fired his house to have blown up the secret, I believe; yet by those violent methods I might have lost my love.

G. 6.

Your

Your uncle may promise what he will, but the devil take me, if I think he will perform; if he means to do any thing for you, now is the time.

Your assurances that you had laid aside your solliciting scheme of a place, gives me pleasure. I cannot bear, that an honest fellow should be constrained to vote contrary to his principles for bread. It is the indigent sons of family, which curse our constitution with place-men, and venal pensioners. But if I begin on politics, I am sure it is time to end my letter: which I do, by assuring you how very sincerely I am,

Your's,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T.

LETTER XVI.

To HENRY MONTAGUE, *Esq*;

Oak-Hill, May 5.

ARASPES tells Cyrus, that he was convinced he had two souls; I think absolutely you have two hearts, neither of which is your own. I never yet heard a fellow so distractedly in love with one woman, so lavish in the praises of another. You speak of the gentle Louisa in such terms as convinces me, had you never seen the lovely Harriet, *she* would have been the *sole* empress of your affections. At present she is only joint-proprietor; for you certainly love her, without knowing it: you love every thing amiable in her. Your last letter was the most heterogeneous composition I ever perused. Indeed I have sometimes thought your worship such a kind of animal. With an heart filled with love and adoration,

adoration, you perceive numberless faults in your mistress. With a heart wholly attached to one object, insomuch that no woman is capable of raising a desire in you, you see perfections in another, perfections of a different complexion from those of your admired Harriet : in short, you are an enigma, formed of contradictions.

So, your Honour expects I should give you a full and circumstantial account of my sentiments of the fair one ? How shall I acquit myself ? I believe I had better be silent, lest I should create in your bosom the passions of anger and jealousy. I would not wish you to possess either of those painful sensations ; nor will I, if I can help it, inspire them.

And first, for Miss Denby : I think her the finest woman I ever yet beheld. I always, till I saw her, esteemed Mrs. Yates, as the perfect criterion of beauty and elegance. But in Miss Denby is
united

united all the majesty of that celebrated actress, with the soft seducing manners of Mrs. Baddeley. Upon my soul, I think it is almost dangerous to be in her company. Such eyes!—such features!—such harmony of limbs! By Heaven! were I to marry merely for the gratifications of sense, Harriet Denby should be the woman above all others. Remember, you must not be either angry or jealous. When you are married, if you do me the honour to invite me to your house, never leave me alone with your wife; if you do, I know not what may be the consequence of the temptation. I hope however, my friendship—I name that first, because that I believe to be the strongest tie—and virtue would protect me.

I do not wonder at your being in raptures with her; particularly too, as she keeps you at such a reserved distance. I could not avoid taking a thousand
little

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little trifling freedoms, I know, were I in your situation. But if I did, I might chance to be consumed in my own flames. There is such a luxuriance of animated health and spirits, as, I think, will always make her a desirable woman to you. She is the kind of person for young fellows to run mad after. I admire her, but she would not be the object of my love, were I disengaged.

Miss Somerville is every thing you say of her; she is more—she is an angel. I think I could discover a secret; but I hold it as an invariable maxim, never to tell a secret to a married man, or one that is in love.

Was it permitted to man to lead the life of angels below, Louisa Somerville, should be my companion. She seems all soul. Her intellectual mind shines out in every lovely feature in her face. Yet it must be a man of some sentiment, that

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discovers her beauties and loves her for them.

“ All can discern a face that's fair,

“ But few a heavenly mind.”

And now, though last not least beloved, for my little Fanny Neville. In her I find every charm that a woman needs possess. She has beauty enough to gain a heart, sense and prudence to keep it :— Virtue and discretion to correct a youthful passion :—Tenderness and sensibility to receive the impression of love ;—Ingenuoufness to reveal her sentiments to the man who truly loves her. Have I drawn a flattering picture of my little Fanny ? If you say I have, I shall think you know nothing about it, and pardon your ignorance.

But I neglect your request.——You ask my advice.—How, my dear Harry, am I to give it ? My acquaintance with Miss Denby was only of two afternoons :—am I then a competent judge ? She has

has a good understanding; she seems to possess good-nature: She only wants to love, to be every thing you can wish her. I think it scarcely possible, that she should not love you; yet at present, to be sure she conceals her feelings. We must make great allowances for a woman of her personal attractions. She is used to, she expects admiration.——A common husband will not do for her. You I think will have love enough to make her—and I am sure have merit enough to make any woman—happy.

You handsome fellows have ten times our chance.—I can come only under the article of agreeable. And without flattery, Harry, I can really assure you, that I never saw those requisites of manly beauty and agreeableness so happily blended as in my friend. But I ought to beg pardon of your understanding, when I compliment your person. However,

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ever, you know me to be sincere in all my professions; and in none more, than that I am,

Your's devotedly,

GEO. LENOX.

LETTER XVII.

To Miss HERBERT.

Berkeley-Square, May 7.

O EMILY! Emily! I can no longer conceal it from myself, —I can no longer conceal it from my friend. Montague has too many charms, —and the sensibility of your Louisa has undone her!

Last night, —last night, the fatal secret discovered itself to me. —Ah! let me hope no one else discovered it. If they should —if they should, —O Emily! I should be wretched indeed.

Fa-

Fatal delusion ! Self-deceiving sensations ! It was pity.—It was compassion.—It was partiality due to his uncommon merit.—It was love, Emily ! but I knew not then its name. On a sudden, the cruel truth burst on my affrighted soul—and I was lost.

Tears, tears, cease to flow. Ye cannot wash away my sorrow—Ye cannot wash from my memory the amiable, ah ! too amiable Montague !

A thousand emotions, to which I was before a stranger, used to seize me whenever I saw Mr. Montague ; but I attributed it to other causes—to any cause but the true one. Sometimes Mr. Bentick came with him : his presence made me uneasy, because I found he had formed hopes I could not authorize :—then they were occasioned by my dread of Mr. Bentick's accompanying him. At other times, because I thought Miss Denby did.

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did not seem pleased with him, and I perceived a melancholy in his features.

But, oh ! last night, I could no longer deceive myself.

We were,—that is, Lord and Lady Bentick, Mr. Bentick, Lady Chester, Mr. Montague, my brother, Miss Denby and myself,—at Vauxhall. While in the box, after supper, Mr. Bentick, on Miss Denby's humming a tune, intreated her to sing. It was certainly an improper request in such a place ; but Miss Denby, being in high spirits, complied, and sung a very favourite air in Orfeo.—By the united persuasions of the gentlemen and ladies I was induced to sing too.—We afterwards sang a duet. All this noise occasioned a number of people to assemble near our box. To be sure they could not suppose us to be women of character by acting—to me—in so strange a manner.

Some

Some time after this we walked about. —The gentlemen left us by ourselves for a little time. As I said before, Miss Denby was in amazing high spirits, and chattered away in the most lively way, very loud,—and then—laughing, and singing a line of a song. In short, Emily, she seemed as if she wanted to be taken notice of, though she cared not by whom, or in what manner.

Some gentlemen followed us some time : Making their remarks on us, not much to our advantage, I assure you. The two sisters were engaged in conversation between themselves.

I happened to be on the outside.—One of the men walked next to me, staring up in my face ; another came behind Miss Denby, and, putting his arms round her waist, turned her about. His companion seized hold of my hand, and swore I should sing him the song I had before, in the dark walk. At that moment our gentlemen appeared. Mr. Mon-

Montague, the foremost, demanded what they meant by their insolence in attacking women of fashion and character. The two brutes, who were drunk, made a very impudent answer; on which Mr. Montague said, if they did not immediately quit the ladies, he would call them to account. O! my Emily! what were my sensations!—what my agony! when I saw one of these wretches, who was distinguished by a star, draw his sword, and making a push at Mr. Montague? I saw the sword, as I thought, through his body. I know not what became of me, till some time after I found myself by the bar, with all the company round me, in my brother's arms.

When I was restored, I discovered Mr. Montague instantly. But my ideas were so confused, that I eagerly asked who was killed. It was some time before I could be convinced no mischief was done; and that the gentlemen had asked pardon.

Lady

Lady Bentick and Lady Chester seemed both displeased with Miss Denby; whose behaviour they considered as the primary cause of bringing their brother's life in danger. *She* seemed vexed that the evening's amusement was broken in upon by my fainting.—“She had no “notion,” she said, “of people having “such weak spirits.—They had better “stay at home, than put people in such “a fuss.” Lady Bentick said, “I had “neither occasioned nor made a fuss; “that she honoured me for my sensibility.”

We had but a gloomy ride home. Every body was out of spirits. Is it to be wondered that I was so? I had just then discovered the secret of my frequent dejection of spirits. O! Emily! I had just then discovered how unhappy and guilty a creature I was!

What a night did I pass! Sleepless most part of it, and that not the worst. Whenever I fell asleep, the mangled corpse

corpse of Montague presented itself to my tortured imagination. Thought sickens at the dreadful scenes which terrified me in the tedious night.

This morning I rose unrefreshed, pale and languid. Miss Denby behaved very stately at breakfast. I did not take much notice of it, because she generally treats me with great reserve.

Before we had finished our breakfast Mr. Montague came. I felt myself change colour; and I trembled to so great a degree, that I could scarcely pour out the tea: happy was I to be so employed, as it prevented my being obliged to look about me.

Miss Denby made a very slight return to his compliment. He was sensible of her indifference, and appeared vexed with it.—He hoped I had quite recovered my fright. I bowed, but could not just then speak for the world. I was not in spirits to talk; and Harriet seemed

inclined to contradict every thing that was said.

Her maid desired she would look at some work she had finished for her, she rose to leave the room.—

“ Shall you be detained long, Miss Denby ?” asked Mr. Montague.

“ You will favour me with your reason for inquiry, Sir ?”

“ I should be happy, Madam, to be honoured a little longer with your company this morning, as I am engaged the rest of the day.”

“ You will be kind enough to excuse me,” said she, making him a formal curtsy, and went out.

Mr. Montague took a chair next me. I had taken up my work, though such a tremor possessed my nerves, that I could not have set my needle for the world.

“ I have not yet thanked you, my dear Miss Somerville, for your kind concern for me last night.”

“ Con-

“Concern! for you, Sir!—I was
“afraid.—Indeed, I was very apprehen-
“sive.—I thought some mischief had
“been done.” I stammered,—hesitated,
and was so confused I hardly knew
what I said,

“No, no; no mischief at all: only
“a slight wound.”——

“A wound! did you say!”

—“Only in my coat. The sword
“scratched my waistcoat, and ran thro’
“my coat.”

O Emily! think what an escape he
had!

I shuddered. “What is the matter?”
said he.

“I was thinking in how imminent
“danger you was. Good God! what
“by this time might have become of,—
“of Miss Denby? You, Mr. Mon-
“tague, might have been killed.”

“Amiable Miss Somerville! How
“I revere your tender humanity.” He

took my hand, and lifted it to his lips. What emotions seized me at that moment! He then took leave of me. When he was gone I reproached myself for not asking him in what manner he had got rid of the vile fellows, who attacked us. He said, he was engaged for the whole day.—Perhaps he was to meet them. I terrified myself so much with my apprehensions, that I could not stir from the place on which I sat. But, my brother relieved my fears by telling me the two men had really asked pardon, and nothing more was to be said on either side. Thus, Emily! my apprehensions for the safety of Mr. Montague were silenced; but who shall give relief to my heart? Oh! my dear! who shall speak peace to my soul?—It has, by a fatal and unjustifiable prepossession, lost every hope of consolation.

Was it for this I was so indifferent to mankind? For this, that the heart,
which

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which wished but for the sincere affection of one man, was destined! Nothing but the anguish I feel can equal the condemnation I bestow on your unhappy ill-fated

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XVIII.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq.*

Park-Street, May 7.

F AITH! George, you had very near lost your friend last night. I was within an inch of being pinked by a sword. I attended my sisters and the *joint proprietors*, as you please to stile them, to Vauxhall. Lord Bentick, Ned, and Charles Somerville, of the train.

We supped, and staid late. Harriet, I think, never seemed in such high spirits; though not the more pleasing to me.

H 3

Could

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Could I indeed have flattered myself, my presence inspired them; my felicity would have been complete; but it was the adulation of the throng of impertinents that gave such animation to her features and expressions. She sung. I thought the request an impudent one, but her compliance still more so: yet I was so much charmed with her voice and execution, that I could not avoid being the loudest in my plaudits. I likewise joined the intreaties to prevail on Louisa to favour us.

After some persuasions she sang a little air; and then Harriet and she gave us "Fair Aurora." It is, by no means, the thing for women of character to expose their talents in public. It is amazing what a concourse of people their harmony brought round the box.

We left the ladies a little by themselves in one of the walks. I first thought of joining them again; and found that
curfed

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curfed macaroni-puppy, Lord G. pulling Mifs Somerville by the arm; and a companion of his impertinently with his arm round Harriet's waift. From both thefe f Situations they endeavoured to extricate themfelves, while my fifters were remonftrating to them their ill behaviour.

I flew like lightening to their affiftance, demanding the reafon of their infolence. Lord G. made fo impertinent an answer, as obliged me to tell him I fhould call him to an account; on which the poltroon inflantly drew his fword, and, making a pafs at me, grafed along my waiftcoat, and ran through the back of my coat. "Damn your cowardly foul!" exclaimed I, fnatching the fword by the hilt out of his hand.

My attention was immediately called from the rascally Lord G.—to the amiable Louifa; who, feeing (as ſhe thought) the fword through my body, concluded

I must be killed, fainted away. She would have fallen to the ground had not her brother supported her in his arms.

Lord Bentick took charge of the rioters; for I thought of nothing but the effect which the appearance of my danger had on the gentle Miss Somerville. We all crowded about her, to give every necessary assistance to her, but without success, for a long time.

One of the people from the bar came to us, and advised us to take her in there. They applied several remedies, but she discovered not the least signs of life. It is impossible to describe the feelings of some of us. Charles Somerville hung over her in the utmost distress, with a face almost as pale as her's, while a tear of anguish stole down his cheek. I think I never beheld brotherly affection so strong as in him. The knowledge, that I was the cause of her fainting, must account for the extreme agitation of my mind.

mind, and my extraordinary emotions when she opened her mild eyes.

During the time of her insensibility, Capt. Maxwell brought in the two offending culprits, who begged pardon for the insolence of their behaviour, and were ready to make any attonement in their power. I told them their safety depended on the recovery of the lady, which, if it was not speedily effected, I would revenge on them. They sneaked off like a couple of puppies; and Louisa soon coming quite to herself, disarmed my anger by turning it into thanksgivings for her recovery. It was some time before we could convince her there had been no mischief done.

Upon my soul those fits are very alarming. I believe she remained at least three-quarters of an hour, without our being able, either from pulse or motion, to perceive the smallest indication of life. My sisters were inexpressibly terrified.—

She is, you know, a very great favourite of theirs. Harriet, though very much frightened, was rather in the pouts; for Lady Bentick accused her as the primary cause of this scene of confusion, by the extreme flippancy of her behaviour. I do not thank her for her great zeal, since I shall be a sufferer by it; as my Harriet behaved very stately to me when I called there this morning.

Used as she has been to my every attention, perhaps she may be displeased that so much of it was last night bestowed on Miss Somerville. I should, however, be happy in her displeasure, if it proceeded from that cause; as I should then hope I became less indifferent to her. Yet, was not my attention the return I ought to make to Louisa? Her amiable sensibility was alarmed on my account.—How pleasing that sensibility! And how general in her! She was nursed with “the milk of human kindness.”

I am

I am afraid last night's adventure will injure her health. I never saw so great an alteration in any one in so short a time: but indeed she has not appeared quite well for some time past.

I admire your notion of my having two hearts. It is like some of your eccentric ideas. But, though that is not the case, I will own, and freely too, that I hardly ever met with so heavenly a disposition as Miss Somerville's.

You say I have two hearts, because I am not blinded by love. I see many imperfections in the woman I adore, which I wish amended; and as many beauties in the woman I esteem, that I should be happy to transfer. But then my lovely Harriet would be too great a blessing to fall to the lot of a mortal. When I dwell on her understanding, and the numberless good qualities she possesses—which at present are only a little eclipsed by her vivacity and passion for admira-

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tion—I adore her: her faults only remind me she is a woman—a dear delicious lovely woman, who will make me as happy as a God. The ideas which the enumeration of her charms inspires, are too enchanting to permit me to give words to my feelings.

Your's,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER XIX.

To Miss SOMERVILLE.

Herbert-Hall, May 10.

MY ever-amiable Louisa! why all this sorrow—this severe unmerited condemnation of the gentlest and worthiest heart that ever inhabited the human breast?

Your secret, my love, discovered itself to me—nay, start not, Louisa—long ago. But I forbore to mention my surmises to you, as I knew unavoidable
pain

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pain to my friend must be the consequence. O! that my lovely, sensible, amiable Louisa had been seen by Montague, before the fascinating charms of that fyren Denby had fixed him her's!

His soul seems your counter-part. Why were they not formed to be united? But what am I doing? I ought to advise you to check your wavering inclinations—to strengthen your evening resolutions.—Where, however, would be the use? *You* know your fatal prepossession should not be indulged.—You know you should arm your soul against it.—You likewise know you are unhappy.—Alas! Louisa, I know that too! I knew it long since; yet I hoped some other attachment might supersede this; which you could have no *hopes* to incite you to cherish.

While he continues amiable, I doubt your partiality will continue; for you admire merit in every one.

How

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How hard is fate ! How unworthy is Miss Denby to possess such a heart as Montague's ! And how eminently worthy is my Louisa ! How blind is he to his own happiness ! Though you will hardly whisper it to yourself ; you must see that Harriet is proud, vain, vindictive, and insensible. I am certain this, though a caricature, is yet her true portrait.

O ! that Montague saw with the eyes of your Emily ! But he is bewitched by the personal allurements of that artful Denby. I can hardly mention her with patience, because she is insensible to love for him ; I could sooner forgive her any thing than that indifference towards so amiable a man. She has been ruined by a doating father ; and the conversation of that pert creature Bab Lascelles. *She* is at present a violent favourite with the flirting coquet Lady Bell Henley. No great credit to her is that intimacy, I think.

Lady

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Lady Bell, you know, piques herself upon saying good things. By the bye, I never heard one good thing of her saying, though many impertinent ones. However, Bab retails them every-where, and, among the giddy and foolish, receives great applause. Lady Fielding is uneasy at the connexion of her sister with this buxom widow ; and endeavours to break through it. — The attempt is hardly worth while ; for the virtue which requires so many cautions, and so much care, is scarce worth preserving.

I wonder how your brother has escaped the keen arrows from Miss Denby's eyes ; or that she has not been tempted to coquet with him. Does he still persist in his resolution of fighting ? Sure there are heroes enough without his adding to the list.

Did I tell you Lestock has parted with his house, and left L — ? He could support an ill conscience ; but the detection
of

of his perfidy, and the necessary contempt his worthlessness occasioned, he could not bear. To be sure the fellow led but a dog's life amongst us; he was therefore in the right to leave us to ourselves: thank God, I believe he has not left his fellow behind him.

I have been in frequent parties with Mrs. Vernon and Miss Cornwall: my time has, indeed, been very much taken up by them. I sincerely wish you were with us: though I am not of opinion that absence is a powerful remedy in a certain disorder: on the contrary, I believe it is not; for, when absent, we only dwell on the merits of the beloved object, which undoubtedly increases the affection: besides, absence from those we love, is always accompanied by a soft regret, which makes the heart more ready to receive favourable impressions, and retain them longer. So you see I am no advocate for that doctrine, "absence for
ever

“ever foe to love.” I think I have heard an objection on the side of the men: that absence, which strengthens the affections of a woman, weakens the attachments of men. If that be true, I again wish my Louisa was with us, and that her sentiments were of the masculine gender.

Indeed, my dear, we lively, giddy, unthinking girls have ten times the advantage over your serious sentimental ones. Love is said to be the most serious passion of the soul; one, framed in your mould, will be most susceptible of tenderness. The giddy girls—in which number I am afraid I must include your little Emily—skim over the flowery land of love like the gaudy butterfly,—while the more sober, and, I believe, less happy tribe, like the industrious constant bee, selects a flower, and, from its balmy leaves, extracts the sweets, but finds them too of-

ten

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ten mixed with bitter, and always clogged with an allay.

Yet do not think, because my disposition is volatile, that I am unsusceptible of tenderness.—No ; I know you are satisfied of my friendship ; and those who are intimately acquainted with one passion cannot be wholly unknown to the rest. But friendship being the less dangerous sentiment, I endeavour to be content with that.

You have no *confidante* in town, Louisa ; do not therefore omit frequently writing to your true friend in the country. Lay before me every thought of a heart in whose every welfare I am so deeply interested. Your example may be of use to me. Adieu, my dearest Louisa !

Your's for ever,

EMILY HERBERT.

L. E. T.

LETTER XX.

To Miss HERBERT.

Berkeley-Square, May 14.

YOUR letters, my beloved Emily ! used to give me the highest delight. Why did not the last ? Because I am changed from what I was.—You talk of my unhappy partiality as of a *common partiality*. — You do not see the misfortune in the light I do. O Emily ! you cannot gloss it over.—Is it not in a degree criminal ? He is already engaged by the strongest ties ; — engaged too, long before I saw him.—Would to Heaven they were married ! Miss Denby wants to put it off for some time longer than was first intended. — Can she love him, and yet give him pain ?

Thank Heaven ! to-morrow we go to Woodley. I shall find many little avocations there that will serve to employ
and

and amuse my mind. The villagers, my little school, my garden, and poultry, will all conduce to take off my thoughts and attention from objects I must ever condemn myself for dwelling upon.

Good God! I can hardly think it possible that Miss Denby should feel any partiality for Mr. Montague, and yet encourage the addresses of another man: but she absolutely allows Lord Hilton to be seen with her at all times.

She says he is an admirer of Miss Lafcelles; if so, I wonder he does not go to visit her sometimes. I have no idea of a man's professing himself the admirer of one woman, and devoting his whole time to another.

That account has made Mr. Montague quite easy; but the ladies, Bentick and Chester, think otherwise: and that Miss Denby is really his pursuit.

Lady Bentick says, she believes Lord Hilton to have designs merely on Harriet's

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riet's fortune, as he has continued to run out his estate since he came to it; and there was a considerable mortgage on it before. Let it be as it will, he is mighty assiduous.

SURELY, my dear, I am prodigiously improved, since you saw me last, in my person; for I find I have made another conquest. No triumph to me, Emily, indeed! though the son of the Earl of H. The old Lord has made proposals to my father; but happily for me, as Lord H. bears but an indifferent character as to morality, my father commended me for not being dazzled either by his coronet, or handsome person. I was conscious of dissimilarity; though I hope I still should have refused him as not being a good man, had I not felt prepossessions which can never be conquered.—No, Emily! I feel I never can eradicate
3 from

from my bosom that tenderness, which will most probably embitter the existence with which it is connected.

Since I have been more taken notice of in public, Miss Denby is less solicitous to appear with me. I never wish to be in her train, as I hate most of the public places. And since she has been introduced to Mr. Montague's sisters, I have obliged her, by staying at home frequently when she has been engaged out.

BUT did you, really, discover long ago my unhappy situation? Or did my Emily trifle with her friend? Ah! no; I fear indeed it was too apparent. In any distress it is natural to look back into our souls for consolation,—It is somewhere said, that women conceal an attachment better than men.—The drowning wretch will grasp a straw—This little

4

observa-

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Observation afforded me some comfort, as I hope I have concealed the feelings of my heart from every one but you. I am, while in company, always on my guard—not a look nor a sigh escapes me; but when I wrote to you, I could not help telling you I was unhappy, because I felt so, although I could not give a name to the cause of my unhappiness.

I am apprehensive sometimes, that I appear negligent, because I would avoid being assiduous. I am for ever checking myself when involuntarily I find I am going to do something for, or say something to, Mr. Montague, which it would better become Harriet to do, or say.

You certainly, my dear Emily, had some *presentment*, when the thoughts of Miss Denby coming to us made you so uneasy. Ah! what endless pain may it not occasion!

No;

No; my brother is totally insensible to her fascinating charms, as you call them. Indeed you seem to be violently set against her, for which your unbounded love for me will hardly excuse you. You discover so many faults in her, while I only perceive charms.—Charms, which enslave the heart of the most deserving of men.

You must despise me, if you thought me incapable of hating her, only because she is adored by a man I think the most lovely and amiable in the world. On the contrary, I shall love her if she makes Mr Montague as happy as I wish him. Whoever conduces to his felicity must be dear to her; who would, with pleasure, resign her life to purchase his happiness, and ask no other reward, than in her last moments to say, “*It is all for you.*”

Miss Denby told me to-day, “She thought me very difficult to refuse two such men as Lord H.—and Mr. Ben—
“tick.”

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“ tick.” I answered, “ I found no difficulty in it : and ’till I was addressed by a man, who suited my taste, I should observe the same method.”

“ You won’t give them the chance to appear agreeable to you from a further knowledge, but dash their hopes at once.”

“ I never wished them to appear in that light to me ; therefore it would have been very wrong to have, by my behaviour, induced them to think such a time might come.”

“ Pshaw! what antiquated notions! One would suppose you had been brought up in the desarts of Siberia.”

“ I should think I deserved to be banished there, if I could wish to give pain to any one; much more to a man who merits some consideration for his tender sentiments of me.” Her answer was an affected laugh at my horrid *outrè* notions.

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I

I intend

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I intend writing to you as soon as I get to Woodley-Park. Short as the time is, how I long for the commencement of it! Dear Woodley! how I doat on thy shades! Yet I fear I shall not enjoy thy sweets as I used to do; thy hills, thy dales, thy streams will remain; but oh! how altered will be

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XXI.

To Miss BARBARA LASCELLES.

The last time of dating from dear Berkeley-Square, May 14.

TO-MORROW we set off for the odious country. The silly Louisa is in more raptures about it than I could have believed in the power of any thing to have excited. I fancy she has a *penchant* for one of her father's gardeners, or some such rural rustic swain.

That

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That divine fellow Lord H— has been struck with her insipid features. “I am jealous of the fellow’s bad taste and blind eye.” The simpleton has no idea of retaining a man without being indecently in love with him. Why, how can she tell but that his soft tale might move her gentle heart in his favour in time? But then, she cannot keep any one in suspense for the world. So, “I don’t like you, Sir;—or I do love you, Sir,” is to be her precise and concise answer to every one.

But Miss found fault with his morals. What would become of half our men of fashion, if every woman was to make the like objections?

That cross old-fashioned sister of your’s, I have, positively, no patience with her. I am monstrously enraged with her preventing your attendance on the lively Lady Bell. I waited on her Ladyship as soon as she arrived in town. I assure

you we did not spare Lady Fielding. The little widow was very smart upon her. She says your father, Lord and Lady Fielding, with Caroline, in grand consultation, looked exactly like the assembly of owls in the British Museum. Your little Captain was there one morning. Lady Bell was counselling him to swim across the Hellespont, which surrounds the old abbey, and to scale the walls for his *Hero*. Pray take care the wind does not blow out the lamp of love.

I ought to be canonized by every coquet that is yet unborn, for my superlative address in preventing Montague from being jealous of my charming Hilton. My dear, you are pretty frequent in your correspondence with your lover, and sometimes inclose a letter for your friend. Don't you admire our sagacity? As good a scheme, I think, as getting [one's husband, or brother-in-law, to frank one's letters on such occasions.

I am,

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I am, however, with all my sagacity, ignorant, at present, of my future intentions. I love title and rank next to universal admiration; nay, I think, they are in themselves so nearly connected, that I can hardly separate them in my own estimation. Then, next to title, rank, and admiration, I really do think Montague has the preference. If Montague was a Lord, I should make no hesitation between him and Hilton; but there is an unspeakable charm in “your Ladyship.” “—How divinely your Ladyship looks to-day!” O Bab! what sweet sounds! But plain Mrs. —, how poor! how contemptible!

Then Montague professes to love and adore, and so forth: But he does not bestow half the praises on my charms as they merit; for, Bab, you may say what you will, a fine woman will be sensible of her attractions, and expects her lover to acquaint her every moment that *he* is so.

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Montague loves like a man who has all his senses about him; but Hilton! the dear fellow talks some times as if he was mad. You never heard such delicate, tender compliments as he pays me. He is however wretched, because he thinks I give the preference to Montague. I cannot tell whether I do or not, all things considered—time will shew.

I have put off my affair, being brought to the ordinary conclusion for some time. Montague was very earnest to have it finished the day my mourning expired; but I begged to be excused. “I said if I took
 “ the first day of my being in colours to
 “ marry, it would look as if I was impatient, and employed the first day of
 “ cency for such an occasion. If I did
 “ not pay all respect to the memory of a
 “ tender parent, how could he give me
 “ credit for making a good wife? I had
 “ no doubts of his constancy; and that,
 “ however lively he sometimes was, if he
 “ could

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“ could examine my heart, there would
 “ be no reason for him to entertain any
 “ of *mine*.” Old Somerville commended
 me much for my filial attention. I said
 some more good things of the same sort,
 so we are all mighty great friends: and,
 to reward me, my guardian has invited
 Montague to be down as much as possi-
 ble. He will have another visitor too,
 that perhaps he expects not:—no other
 than Lord Hilton.

I am determined to devote part of this
 afternoon to Lady Bell Henley. I would
 have spent the whole day with her, but
 Montague assured me his sisters would be
 quite unhappy—another term for being
 very angry I suppose—if I did not sup with
 them, as they should not have the plea-
 sure of my company for some time. Be-
 ing wonderful civil, I complied with
 his, and their formal Ladyship’s, request.
 The gentle Louisa, as Mr. Montague
 styles that piece of still life, was invited;

but, having some domestic concerns to execute, begged to be excused. I assure you, she is a monstrous favourite with the two Countesses. Upon my life, Bab, I think these tame animals generally are so. People imagine they can do what they will with such meek tender creatures; and who does not love power? but such girls of spirit as you and I, the women generally are afraid of. They cannot bear the superiority we claim from all the world. How are we listened to in conversation! while one of your meek ones, if they hazard an observation in company, is not heard, or at least not attended to.

How inferior do half her acquaintance appear before Lady Bell! She commands the whole circle. Every one pays their court to her. Where-ever you go,—
 “This smart thing was said by Lady
 “Bell—such an observation.” Every-
 body is disposed to laugh at her witticisms; and, properly told, they may
 draw

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draw a second applause to the retailer. There are some, I make no doubt who despise her : But from whence does their contempt arise ? because they are unable to imitate her, and are wholly eclipsed by her resplendent qualities.

Every-body stands in awe and silent admiration before these *belle esprits* of the age ; while their behaviour to a woman they will stile amiable, borders upon a kind of familiar indifference, which seems to say ;
“ I know you to be of a gentle disposition, and I will supply you with opportunities for exercising your meek faculties.” Have I not drawn a true portrait ?
And while women are more admired for their external appearance ; and having a happy flow of spirits, which nothing but a conscious superiority can produce—called perhaps vanity in the dictionary of the ancients—should we not be fools to endeavour at attaining those qualities which our grandmothers, or a very few of our

modern women, stile most essential, when, by the mode of the men's behaviour to *us*, we find our account so much in being women of the world?

For my part, I could never be content with the cold insipid esteem which men ever profess to feel for your domestic sober females. They will allow such a character amiable, but instantly turn yawning from it—leaving its virtue to its own reward—and, in the sprightly conversation of a Lady Bell, lose the remembrance of a Lady P.—whose insipidity alone rendered all her charms distasteful to a gay husband. No, no, Bab, such characters are not in this world desirable. Our grandmothers and maiden aunts may tell us that the men will flirt with a girl of spirit for an hour,—a-day; but that the girl of true merit is the one they will fix on for life; and so let them.—For who on earth is so much neglected as these girls of true merit by their husbands? Indeed,

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deed most wives, now-a-days, are in the same predicament. Some, however, have learnt the antient law of retaliation; but that is attended with danger in most cases.

“Divorces,” Lady Bell says, “at this end of the town, are now, by their frequency, not more disgraceful than bankruptcies in the city.”

A Lady P.—pines in secret at the shameful neglect of her Lord;—while Lady G—, and a whole string of others—pay him in his own coin, and—recriminating—defy him.

You will, perhaps, my dear Bab, infer from what I have advanced, that I am no friend to matrimony:—really I am not at present. Though, I believe if I was you, I should marry immediately out of contradiction; and to convince my old-fashioned relations, that it was out of their power to controul me. But you and I, Lascelles, are differently situated: *my* friends want me to be shackled; which

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is, perhaps, one reason why I am indifferent about it. However, as it is a step we all must take, I certainly shall, one time or other, become that animal called wife. But then, must I bid adieu to admiration—to conquest—to every thing desirable?—Forbid it, youth, beauty, spirit—in a word, forbid it,

HARRIET DENBY.

LETTER XXII.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq.*

Woodley-Park, May 28.

WOODLEY-PARK is the sweetest rural spot in England. George, you would be in raptures with the enchanting scenes around you. The estate here is about nine hundred a-year; which, after the death of Mr. Somerville, will devolve on his daughter; his other estates

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estates come to the Captain. This charming place was settled on the late Mrs. Somerville, and younger children. I wondered how Mr. Somerville could have had a thought of parting with it, as most likely it must have been sold, if there had been more children; but he told me he dedicated this place to his wife, because it was here he first saw her, after a long and painful separation.

I came down hither a few days after the family, accompanied by a Mr. Menil, a friend of young Somerville's, and a very deserving man. He has lately, within these three weeks, had an addition to his fortune of five-and-twenty hundred a-year, by the death of an uncle. Now, if your's, Lenox, would do the same, what an advantage would it be to you!

You are a very good fellow, I am sure, to behave so well as you do to him. Much obliged you are to him, certainly, while he maintains you, only to make
you

you sensible of your dependence: and when he can with-hold it no longer, you are to be grateful to his memory, for leaving that behind him which he could not carry away with him.

My dear Harriet has, for some time past, behaved like an angel. I am more and more in love with her. She has, however, put off our wedding for some time longer than I could wish, though I adore her for her reasons. How commendable is her filial regard to her father's memory! She behaves with a degree of tenderness I never before saw in her, and which fills me with raptures I never before experienced.

I must give you a little account of the *environs* here, as they have been improved by Mr. Somerville's family. When he first came down hither, about thirty years since, he found the tenants poor, and mostly at rack-rents. Poverty had destroyed in them the desire of industry,
and,

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and, from a despair of ever retaining the necessary comforts of life, they became beggars. Want produced contentions amongst them; and, as in Rousseau's state of nature, the strongest overcame the weaker in their frequent disputes.

In this deplorable situation, Mr. Somerville found them. He endeavoured to remove the various causes of complaint brought every day before him: but to remedy these growing evils, he found it requisite to new-model the whole place, and to civilize the inhabitants.

He made known his intentions; that if every family would contribute their share of labour, he would supply them with the means to raise a comfortable dwelling. Labour before had never brought profit, therefore it was to them a state of slavery; but the promised advantages lighted up in them a spark of emulation; which, if it had not its foundation

dation in virtue, operated as well to the community.

Some made bricks, others cut timber: age and youth, and each sex, were employed: and Mr. Somerville, like the antient Cadmus, saw his town rise from earth.

Every family had a convenient house, a yard and small garden. To some were annexed a few acres of land, as their different geniuses required. His farms were divided into small lots; none exceeding a hundred a year. He remitted to them the first annual payment, besides lending them money, and supplying them with the present necessities.

Mrs. Somerville enlarged and improved the design of her husband. At each end of the village a large house was erected: the upper one, for a retirement for the ancient persons, who were unable to procure their own livelihood, and by that means were burdensome to their families.

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milies. But though they were incapable of labour, they yet had it in their power to be serviceable in many little offices: and what little matter they earned served to increase the fund. The lower house was a school for children, who were taken from those families which had more than they could support. Every care is taken of their education in those branches for which they seem to have an inclination. It is a pleasing sight to see such a number of little innocents, all cloathed in the same uniform, at their different employments.

There are various kinds of manufactures carried on in this school-house, under the immediate inspection of some persons selected for that purpose, and by the direction of Miss Somerville.

To inspire a proper ambition, there is a premium given for the best of every kind of work, which are always dispensed on a fixed day, by the fair hands of

Louisa;

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Louisa; whose judgment and discretion are ever conspicuous on such occasions.

The distribution of prizes form an agreeable festival, of which, in the course of the year, they have several.

Every Sunday evening, if fine, the whole town assemble to divert themselves, after the duties of the day have been strictly observed. There you see some walking in little parties, others running races, leaping, or such rustic diversion; for all bodily exercises are promoted to increase strength.

On Miss Somerville's birth-day there are a certain number of young maidens portioned off, by the interest of a sum of money for that purpose, to the young men of their choice. In a few weeks, when Louisa reaches nineteen, ten weddings are to be celebrated. I should like exceedingly to make the eleventh, but I must not yet think of it.

But,

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But, Lenox, are you not charmed with this plan? I assure you I am so much delighted and edified by it, that I am determined to set about such a scheme on my return to my estate. What a happy nation should we be, if our rich would thus bestow some of their superfluous time, and of that money which riot and dissipation squanders! I never for the future shall throw away sums idly and extravagantly, without great compunction of spirit, as I shall certainly reflect how many poor I might make happy, by bestowing it to the greatest advantage both to them and myself.

How very happy I shall esteem myself, if ever I can so far domesticate my Harriet, as to find her receiving pleasure in inspecting my little commonwealth! But if I am denied that satisfaction, I must be doubly diligent myself.

What a rational plan is this! And how politic likewise! For, by enabling
your

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your tenants to get money, you are sure of having your rents chearfully paid. The nine hundred pounds—the annual product of the estate—is always paid in to Mr. Somerville's steward in one day. His other estates, one of which of three thousand a year, about twenty miles from hence, is under much the same regulation; the whole consisting of small farms, well cultivated. He is determined to let no tenant hold more than two hundred pounds a year, and very few of them; by which means the land is well cultivated, and the markets are supplied with every convenience at a moderate rate.

I am so well convinced of the utility of preventing farmers ingrossing opulent farms, of eight hundred or a thousand a year, that I am resolved to make a revolution in mine, and divide them, that all may live.

Will

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Will you, my dear Lenox, undertake to assist me in my plan, and give me your opinion of it? I think the new scene may afford you some pleasure, and I shall be still more satisfied with it, if you will go hand in hand with me.

I am desirous of receiving the blessings of the poor: and I heartily condemn myself for being hitherto so negligent of their welfare. What pleasing reflections must lull the worthy Somerville to rest, and with what serenity of mind and heart-felt joy must he wake, while the rising generation calls him blessed! How great—how extensive his charity! and how permanent—how exquisite his present reward! A man who thus lives the life of the righteous may never fear that his end will be like theirs.

May such examples improve me!

Your's faithfully,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T.

LETTER XXIII.

To Miss SOMERVILLE.

Portman-Square, June 3.

AS you, my dear Miss Somerville, are on the spot, I take the liberty of begging to be informed in what kind of way my brother and Miss Denby proceed.

She is an exceeding fine woman, and Harry is the most in love of any man I know. My attachment, and that of my sister's, is so extensive, that the least surmise of his not being so happy as we wish him, and as his merit deserves, makes us very uneasy. Tell me, my amiable young friend, do you think Miss Denby really possessed of those qualities which will constitute his felicity? I should hope you know her disposition, as you have lived together some months; and if you

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do not, it must argue an unfavourable reserve on her side, which will be far from strengthening my affection for her. The amiable sincerity which distinguishes your character, must, I should think, create the same in her.

Lovely as she is, both Charlotte and myself are surprized at my brother's violent attachment, for she is directly opposite, if I can read her character, from the woman I always thought he would choose: ah! how opposite is she to the woman on earth my sister and I wish him to choose!

I have been told by Mr. Bentick, that Lord Hilton is extremely assiduous about Miss Denby, particularly when neither my sister nor I am present. What can she mean by encouraging the assiduities of any man, at the time she owns herself engaged to another? I am uneasy for Harry at present, but who can describe my affliction on thinking how wretched
he

he may be, when united to a woman of her principles! I say principles; though I fervently pray that her heart is not so depraved as her outward behaviour indicates. If I could discover that she really loved my brother, I should then have some hopes: for she is by no means deficient in understanding; but how strangely has her passion for admiration perverted her mind!

Your character, my dear Miss Somerville, was no stranger to me; it gave me great pleasure to hear my brother's intended wife was to be your guest, till she married. From your example I hoped she would receive sweet instruction, and mildly learn to respect herself. Your person however, you know, was utterly unknown to me; don't accuse me of any flattery, when I tell you how sorry I was to find my mistake: as I never yet saw any woman—but it all does not signify, my brother seems irrevocably fixed, and
no-

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nothing remains for me, but to wish him all possible happiness : Lady Chester joins in that wish, as she likewise does in my sincere admiration of the amiable Miss Somerville.

I am,

Dear Madam,

Your humble servant,

MARIA BENTICK.

LETTER. XXIV.

To the Right Hon. the Countess of BENTICK.

Woodley-Park, June 6.

IN what words shall I address myself to your ladyship—how tell you in what manner your letter both pleased and pained me?

You do me honour, my dear Lady Bentick, an honour, of which my more

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perfect knowledge of myself, tells me I am not worthy.

Indeed I do not think myself a competent judge of the merits of Miss Denby: young women seldom are of one another. Yet, as far as I can *judge*, she has but one fault; how few are there, Madam, who have but one; that one too of a nature that time must conquer. I do not think she is possessed of that lively sensibility for Mr. Montague, which most other women would feel for a man so very amiable; but she has certainly too much generosity—she could not, I am sure, mean really to encourage the addresses of Lord Hilton. No, I am convinced she thinks herself absolutely engaged to your brother. I join in both your Ladyships wishes for his happiness; no man, I am certain, can deserve it more than he does.

Lord Hilton, I have heard, is intimate with Sir William Freeman in our neigh-

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neighbourhood ; he is to be down some part of the summer ; yet I think your Ladyship should not be uneasy on that account : Miss Denby assured Mr. Montague, that Lord Hilton was under engagements to Miss Lascelles, which is undoubtedly true, because they correspond. Your Ladyship seems to have the highest esteem for your amiable brother ; can you then think it is possible for any woman that knows him—I mean that is distinguished by him, to feel the least preference to another ? But your love is accompanied by fears for his happiness——Ah ! may those fears be averted ! I know nothing that could make me more wretched than to see—I say if I was in the situation of your Ladyship, nothing would make me so wretched as the prospect of my brother's not being happy.

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Believe me, dear Madam, the felicity of *all* your family is sincerely prayed for, by

Your Ladyship's devoted,

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XXVIII.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-Park, June 7.

I HAVE been extremely distressed, my Emily, by a letter I received from Lady Bentick. I will inclose it, together with my answer for your perusal. Her Ladyship's expressions in my favour and hints confused me so much, that I was hardly sensible what I was about. But I have been more distressed this morning than I ever was in my life. It does not signify, Emily! I am born to be miserable; and miserable I must be.

Have

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Have I told you,—I know not what I wrote in my last—that I believe the day for the wedding is fixed?—It is not that knowledge though that has made me miserable.—No, no, 'tis what I wished. Would to Heaven the day was over; I then should have but one desire after hearing he was happy; but you would be angry with me if I was to *tell* you,—and I could not support your anger.

You know you had always suspicions of Mr. Menil entertaining a partiality for me; I had not the least. But on the strength of my refusing two very good offers lately, and the acquisition to his fortune, he this morning declared his long preference of me to the rest of my sex.

I doubt in some measure I flattered him into a belief, that he was not disagreeable to me:—disagreeable indeed he never was, but I had not the least inclination for him in my life, as I have al-

ways told you; but you know there is a tenderness in my nature, which I cannot help shewing to every one that seems in distress: he has not been well for some days, and the assiduity which is so natural to me inspired those hopes in him.

I was sitting in the little root-house in the wood which you helped to ornament, and which for that reason is particularly beloved by me—my thoughts intent on Lady Bentick's letter. Mr. Menil was by me almost before I saw him. I inquired particularly after his health, as I had not seen him at breakfast. "He thanked me for the obliging interest I took in his health, and wished I would give him leave to devote that and his future life to me." He went on in the same strain, telling me, "that the acquisition to his fortune would give him no pleasure, unless I would share it with him."

I stop-

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I stopped him in his speech, by hastily asking, "Have you informed my father of your intentions?"—

"No, I have not yet."

"My brother?—have you ever mentioned this to him?"

"No, I have not; but I will immediately, since you desire it."

What could he think of my actions and words? I caught both his hands in mine; "O! then, if you have not, let me intreat you, for the sake of Heaven, never to mention the least word to them concerning this fatal attachment."

He drew back with the most altered countenance. "Are you in earnest?—Good God! what am I to think!"

"Oh! pardon me, Mr. Menil, but if you are resolved to speak to my father, I am wretched indeed!"

"And can you think I would make you wretched? Ah! no; I wished to have made you happy.—O Louisa!"

“ O Miss Somerville ! how have you
 “ deceived me ! how have I deceived
 “ myself ! ”

“ Indeed, indeed I never deceived
 “ you,” cried I weeping.

“ No, no, I only am to blame. My
 “ foolish fond believing heart, that con-
 “ strued your general politeness into *more*
 “ than politeness to me, is sufficiently
 “ punished for its presumption. But
 “ unhappy as I am, I would not cause
 “ you a moment’s uneasiness for the uni-
 “ verse. Would to Heaven I could recal-
 “ my words, in my own breast should
 “ my sentiments for you remain concealed.
 “ Those inestimable tears, which my de-
 “ claration has drawn from your lovely
 “ eyes, are the severest reproaches to
 “ me.”

“ I hold myself infinitely obliged to
 “ you, Mr. Menil, for your very kind
 “ consideration of me. The friend of
 “ my beloved brother you have ever
 “ been ;

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“ been ; permit the sister to hope you
“ will grant her a share of your valued
“ friendship. Believe me, Sir, I shall
“ be very unhappy unless you will allow
“ me to call you my friend.”

“ Ah ! Miss Somerville, you may call
“ me what you please, and I will be con-
“ tent. But why do I not see the best of
“ women happy ? Amiable Louisa !
“ will you deny to friendship the cause of
“ your uneasiness ? In the midst of my
“ severe disappointment add not to my
“ unhappiness, the pang of knowing
“ you are likewise not happy.”

“ Let me see returning health and
“ pleasantry in your countenance, Mr.
“ Menil, and I shall be happy.”

“ Dear and ever beloved Louisa ! if
“ possible, you shall be obeyed. But,
“ oh ! may you never know one half
“ of the anguish which now rends my
“ heart ! Such sweetness ! yet such stea-
“ diness ! — Yes, Madam, hard as the

“talk is, I will be your friend, and, if
“in nature, only your friend.”

He left me precipitately in great emotion. Poor Menil, if my pity will console thee, it is thine.

While deeply revolving on this perplexing incident, Mr. Montague entered the root-house. His bearing a part in my cogitations, threw me into some confusion when I saw him. My eyes bore the testimonies of affliction; I believe he perceived I had been weeping.—But I have no time to tell you what he said.—Ah! what are to me his kind professions! I too, like poor Menil, must remain content with friendship.

I think no one, who so plainly perceives the impropriety—to call it by no harsher name—of an unhappy attachment, as I do, can strive more against it. But hitherto my endeavours have not been attended with success.

Idle-

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Idleness is called the nurse of love: I do not permit myself to be a moment unemployed; but I have learnt to do many things mechanically, while my thoughts are busily fixed on another object.

My altered looks are taken notice of. In town I attributed my indisposition to the hurry we lived in; but here I am the same. My father and brother are alarmed, and would have the advice of Dr. Bladen. He proposed my riding on horse-back as the most salutary. I comply with the request of my friends rather than my own inclination or hopes that it will be of service to me. However, I think it my duty to do every thing in my power to prolong my life, though the circumstances of it are not desirable to me.

Adieu! my beloved Emily! As poor

K 6

Me-

Menil says, may you never feel half the anguish which rends the heart of

Your

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XXVI.

To Miss LASCELLES.

Woodley-Park, June 10.

LORD have mercy upon me, Bab! I have done a foolish thing.—Some how or other that creature Montague has got my promise to marry him very soon:—nay, I believe he named the very day, and I had not power to contradict him. What the deuce ailed me to be in so complying a mood? He took me by surprize. I was in a wonderful good humour; and he was that afternoon uncommonly agreeable. I could hardly deny him any thing.—Sure I was bewitched!

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I cannot express to you his raptures on my shewing him some little tenderness; indeed I could not avoid it.—Yet pleased as I was at the time, I am sorry I consented to marry him so soon.—I cannot bear to think of the time; but suppose he will remind me of it.

I fancy Louisa intends to make a die of it. I never saw any creature so altered in my life as she is. Her father has had the advice of a physician, who is of opinion her case is consumptive. She however seems cheerful in company, or at least wears the appearance of cheerfulness; I have not examined into the affair. I am too much taken up with my own concerns.—Do you know, Bab, Hilton is come down to Sir William Freeman's? It happens a little *mal-a-propos* to be sure. What could possess me to tell Montague I would marry him! Dear Bab! extricate

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cate me, and you will eternally oblige
your devoted slave,

HARRIET DENBY.

LETTER XXVII.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq*;

Woodley-Park, June 9.

I Positively will never go to the drawing-room any more of his Majesty's birth-day ; so much more respect can be shewn in the country on that happy occasion. I will not describe to you all the festivity and joy lighted up in the countenances of the happy villagers, nor our entertainments, because I mean to observe just the same at Bellefont next year, and hope to have your worship a spectator.

For ever blessed will that day be to me ; for my adored Harriet, beyond my hopes, blessed me with suffering me to
fix

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fix our wedding-day. Never yet did I taste half such felicity. I pressed the lovely charmer to my heart—My heart that beat to the tenderest notes of love. While my arms infolded her lovely waist, I asked her, “when I should see a period to my misery?”—Sweetly smiling she bade me “name that period myself.” I, fearful of offending by my precipitancy, fixed on three weeks hence.—She was going to make some objection, but I stopped her enchanting mouth with a thousand kisses. Congratulate me, Lennox, for till that day I never was happy.

Sweetly condescending has she behaved to me since. Oh! she is all my fondest hopes desire! Three weeks! How tedious will the time appear!—Should she however revoke my happy destiny—but I will not think of it.

But why must the bliss of mortals ever be mixed with an alloy?—Why, when I know and feel myself happy, must I
see

see the amiable Louisa sinking under, I fear, an incurable disorder?

Her delicate constitution was not strong enough for the trials it has had this winter. A life of dissipation would very soon prove her death. But there is something more than illness I am convinced in her case. Would to Heaven I could fathom her indisposition! How readily would I apply every remedy to remove her internal or outward pain!

The other day I surprized her in a melancholy state; she had been weeping. Menil had just left her; I saw him come out, and from his appearance I judged what had been their discourse. I told her, "I doubted not that Mr. Menil had been making her the *confidante* of a secret long known to every one."

"What do you mean, Mr. Montague?" asked the blushing maid in a sweet hesitating accent.

"Why,

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“ Why, have you not long discovered
“ the source of Mr. Menil’s attention to
“ your family ?”

“ The pain with which I received
“ the intelligence this morning, can give
“ a better answer than at present I am
“ able to do,” returned she, with her
eyes fixed on the ground.

“ You astonish me! I always thought
“ Mr. Menil had been a great favourite
“ of your’s.”

“ As a worthy man, and as the friend
“ of my brother, Mr. Menil is intitled to
“ my friendship. I possess that senti-
“ ment for him, and he is contented
“ with it.”

“ Pardon me ; but I cannot think his
“ countenance bore the traces of content.
“ I am likewise concerned to see in the
“ gentle features of Miss Somerville a
“ melancholy which has too long pre-
“ vailed.

“ My health,” returned she blushing,
“ has

"has not for some time been so good as
"it used to be."

"Nor your spirits I am sure."

"They were never very high."

"But in so sweet a disposition, such a
"change must have some cause. You
"have certainly lost your heart, without
"being acquainted with the theft. Come,
"come, have I not guessed the cause of
"your dejection?"

"Have you not guessed the cause,
"Mr. Montague!" turning her glister-
ing eyes on me:—"I should rather
"hope you had not."

"Why so, Miss Somerville?"

"If you had, Sir, you must have
"known my attachment could not have
"been a fortunate one.—And—I—ex-
"pected more generosity from Mr. Mon-
"tague."

"Forgive me, my dear Miss Somer-
"ville! I meant not to occasion you
"the least uneasy sensation. I meant to
"rally

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“ rally you out of a little melancholy,
“ which I was apprehensive might, if
“ indulged, increase.”

“ Ah! Sir, your remedy is too pun-
“ gent. Few disorders can bear it.—
“ Most require soothing lenitives.”

“ Amiable Louisa! I cannot bear to
“ see you unhappy. Is there any cir-
“ cumstance in which I can be serviceable
“ to you? You know not what interest
“ I take in all that concerns you. There
“ is but one person on earth I esteem
“ more than yourself. So much sweet-
“ nefs of temper I have ever found in
“ you.—Such a general philanthropy.—
“ Such”—

“ —O spare me, Mr. Montague,” in-
“ terrupted Louisa, with some degree of
“ confusion.—“ How undeserving your
“ commendations do I think myself!
“ How very culpable should I be, were
“ I to repine, while I have every enjoy-
“ ment of life! Such a parent!—A
“ bro-

“ brother, and permit me to add—a
 “ friend. I am not, I hope, deceived,
 “ but I think *you* are happier than you
 “ were some days since. Am I wrong
 “ in my conjectures, Mr. Montague ?

“ You are not. The alteration in my
 “ beloved Harriet’s behaviour to me
 “ gives me inexpressible delight. She
 “ has promised me the honour of her
 “ hand within this month. With cheer-
 “ fulness too she promised me. With
 “ reason then, my amiable Miss Somer-
 “ ville, do you see me happier : perfect-
 “ ly so should I be, could I see you in
 “ a way to possess so invaluable a blef-
 “ sing.”

“ Ah ! let not the indisposition which
 “ preys on me interrupt your felicity !
 “ I sincerely congratulate you, Mr.
 “ Montague. O may your nuptials be
 “ propitious ! May Miss Denby make
 “ you as blest as—you deserve to be.

“ I,

I, bowing, thanked her, but said; “ I
“ doubt, Miss Somerville, you are no
“ friend to the state.”

“ Why should Mr. Montague harbour
“ so unfriendly a surmise? The prepa-
“ rations I am making for next Tuesday
“ I think might contradict that opinion.”

“ That you are generously solicitous
“ for the happiness of others, I have
“ been abundantly sensible, since I have
“ had the honour of your acquaintance.
“ But why should you wholly disregard
“ yourself? Lovely as you are in per-
“ son and mind, is it possible you can
“ possess an obdurate heart?”

“ I think I do not:” answered she, in
a low tremulous voice. “ Yet one can-
“ not always make an election where one
“ is importuned. Various causes may
“ prevent our meeting the person whose
“ mind is congenial with our own.—
“ But, if you will permit me, Sir, I will
“ put an end to a conversation which

“ can

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" can answer no purpose in the world.

" Think not hardly of me, however :

" for, believe me, were the dispensing of

" happiness a task assigned me, myself

" would be the last person thought of."

She rose, and led to the house. I followed her, full of admiration and grief.

She is a lovely amiable girl, Lenox !
What pity she should not be happy ?

I found a letter of your's the other day in my pocket ; in which you give me your opinion of my charmer, the gentle Louisa and your beloved. Don't fret, I am not going to take you to task for your performances, or to write a friendly criticism upon your draughts :—but you say, concerning Miss Somerville, that you think you have discovered a secret ; you have however laid down an ill-natured maxim of never telling a secret to a married man, &c. Now for God's sake, and for the more immediate sake of Miss Somerville, if your mighty se-

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cret regards her happiness, lay aside your abominable anti-matrimonial principles, and discover it to me, I may be of service to her. Deeply as I am interested in the wish of soon becoming the husband of Miss Denby—I would for some time forego that happiness, if I could be of the least use to Miss Somerville. But, perhaps you thought as I did, that Menik was the favoured man. That then was your secret.—

Adieu!

Your's,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER XXVIII.

To Miss DENBY.

Fielding-Place, June 14.

SO you have consented to marry Montague, have you?—Foolish girl! what have you done? I will tell you.—

I

I have gained a little private intelligence, no matter by what means; it is this; Montague is not above half satisfied with your present behaviour.—Your passion for exhibiting yourself in public makes him very uneasy.—Lord, Bab! I hear you say, I know all this. True; but you are only acquainted with the cause, now attend to the effects. You will be taken down to Bellefont—three hundred miles from London—for the summer-months, as he will tell you, but believe him not; you will not return to town. No, child, you will be constrained to pass your days, far removed from every joy and consolation. He will be monstrously jealous of you; tho' that to a woman of spirit will not be a matter of concern, could she reside in London and partake of its amusements; but in the country—think, Harriet, of that!—in the odious country to have a husband jealous of the attentions of the

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next country, rusticated squire—insufferable !

How shall I pity you! Poor Denby ! how will you be changed ! To bid adieu to the ball, the opera, the park, the play, and all the bewitching round of pleasure you have it now in your power to enjoy !—Surely, surely, you will never consent thus to bury yourself.

Yet, perhaps, I am needlessly bewailing the lamentable life you will lead. You may perhaps be reconciled to the idea of spending your days in solitude,—being seen and admired by one man only, and that man your husband.

You may reflect that you have had your share of amusement this last winter, and that your affection for your *caro sposa*, will make the long evenings appear chearful. Indeed, I rather wondered how he could permit you to partake so freely of the *beau monde*, as you have done ; but his present intentions justify

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his ready acquiescence to your frequenting all the polite places of public resort.

Well, you will lead a most delightfully entertaining life. How shall I envy you! But, upon my honour, it shall be only from traditional record, for do not expect I will immerse into so dismal a place, as I am told Bellefont is.

To you its horrors may become familiar.—You certainly love Montague immensely—or you could not hesitate a moment which of your admirers to choose. I am resolved, if ever I marry, my man shall have no particular *penchant* for the country.

It will be high diversion for all the girls, who have so often envied the distinction you have ever exacted, to hear that the divine Harriet Denby has yielded to the solicitations of the beloved Montague, and retired to the peaceful habitations of her husband's ancestors.—Why, you will be the pattern of all good wives.—I expect to see your conjugal virtues printed in letters of gold, and read over, every night and morning, by each
fair

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fair virgin of Britain, who wishes to pass so delectable a life.

Seriously, Denby, I am heartily sorry for you—I wish your tenderness for your destined husband,—goaler, I was going to say—was not quite so strong.—But so it is. And, at the age of twenty, you will be lost to the joys of this world ; to all its sweet satisfactions — and I fear, very much fear, to your friend,

BARBARA LASCELLES.

LETTER XXIX.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-Park, June 15:

TOO long have my letters been entertaining to my Emily ! a fatal sameness has run through the whole.—A little adventure may change the topic, though the matter of it be still melancholy.

As I was walking yesterday before breakfast, [which I am ordered to do, or

else ride on horseback] I rambled a good way from the park, of that side which leads to the bridge: I was roused from a little sort of *resverie* by the sound of a guittar. It was prettily played on, as I could discover through the trees by a young gentlewoman. There was such an appearance of artless simplicity, in every thing about her, as strangely attracted my notice.

Her dress was worked muslin. A chip hat, with the palest pink ribbons. I wished much to see her face; soon I had that satisfaction: she looked up, and her countenance wore a sadness, which yet seemed more the effect of accident than of habitude.

Without being a beauty, she had a sweetness in her whole manner; which at once, rendered her interesting and pleasing.

From playing the minuet in Ariadne, she began the symphony of a song, one of the Vauxhall ones, "Come hope! "thou queen of endless smiles."—By her tender manner, it seemed as if hope
was

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was necessary to sustain within her a desire of life; yet, notwithstanding her delicate invocation, the visionary phantom was at a great distance, for she wiped away a trickling tear, that would intrude to interrupt her soft lay.

Being really fatigued with my walk, I was prompted to present myself before her; which, if I had not had that excuse to plead to myself, certainly should not; as I was rather apprehensive my intrusion might be somewhat unseasonable, and wear more the appearance of impertinent curiosity, than a desire of being serviceable. However, I repented not of my resolution in addressing the fair stranger; for such I discovered her to be. Her conversation was so politely pleasing, that I was exceedingly sorry when I was obliged to leave her. She expressed her concern at our separation, in such a manner, as made me very ready to give credit to her pretty professions.

I told you she was not a beauty; yet, if beauty consists in such an assemblage of features, as delights the beholders, she

certainly might claim the palm from many who now possess it.

While we were chatting, a pretty little wanton greyhound, of the Italian breed, came running up to her, and, leaping up in her lap, seemed to call for her attention. She involuntarily caressed the little *Fidelle*, with the utmost fondness.—For a moment she appeared absent, but, recollecting herself, apologized to me for what might look an absurdity in her; but that this little creature was the gift of one dearer to her than all the world; and that she had too few comforts in this life, not to cherish *those* allowed her. I admired *Fidelle*, in order to give her time to recover her tone of voice, which suffered some degree of hesitation in her speaking. It was a sweet pretty fawn-coloured creature, with a blue ribbon tied round its neck.—

I wanted my new acquaintance to accompany me to the park; but she intreated to be excused, as not being fond of seeing a stranger; though she hoped I would, now-and-then, oblige her with
my

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my company. I readily promised I would give myself that pleasure; and, this day, I paid her a second visit. I could observe, mixed with her pleasure at seeing me, a kind of surprize that I had kept my word. What a reflection on the world!—Good God! that it should occasion astonishment to any one, that one fellow-creature should seek out the habitation of another (though an obscure one), and wish to extricate them from, or enable them to sustain, distress!

I found, on my return home, my father very uneasy at my absence. I was gently chid for taking so long a walk, which might be prejudicial to me in my ill state of health. I informed them I had found a resting-place, and the pleasure I had received from my excursion.

My agreeable acquaintance is situated at a lone farm-house, very neat, and convenient. There was the appearance of elegant frugality (to use the expression) which ran through her dress, accommodations, and attendance.

She had been used, I could easily per-

ceive, to genteel life, and had read a great deal; by which she had acquired a proper train of thinking, which enabled her to bear solitude without sinking into gloominess. I wish to know something of her; I could see she was not happy: in the most delicate manner I could use, I hinted my desire to her.

“ I blame not your solicitude, my dear
 “ Madam; it reflects the highest honour
 “ on your benign heart. But will you
 “ not think the worse of me, if I conceal
 “ my name? I have not the least doubt
 “ that in your breast my secrets would
 “ for ever be buried; but they are not
 “ altogether my own.

“ Appearances, in the eyes of suspi-
 “ cion, are undoubtedly against me; un-
 “ happily for me, they have ever been so.
 “ There was once a time, when I was al-
 “ most tempted to wish I was as happy,
 “ as the misjudging world supposed me
 “ to be: but I conquered that aspiring
 “ dangerous wish, and fled from all dear
 “ to me,—to solitude—to penury and
 “ tears.” The last expression seemed to
 issue

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issue from her unawares. She blushed, and wiped the drops from her burning cheek.

I was extremely softened. I took her hand ; and could not presently speak : at last “ If, if it is possible for me to be of any
“ service to you, I hope you will make
“ me so happy as to give me an oppor-
“ tunity. Think me not impertinent-
“ ly intrusive. I cannot restore to you
“ all you hold dear ; but, from solitude
“ and any other little inconvenience, I
“ can seclude you ; and, if I cannot dry
“ your tears, — behold one who will
“ weep with you, — and share your afflic-
“ tion.”

The sweet girl surveyed me with an air of astonishment. “ Good God ! is it possible !
“ Is such candour ! such generosity ! such
“ unexampled goodness of heart ! still re-
“ maining ? How seldom are the unfortu-
“ nate and poor thus received by the happy
“ and opulent ! O that I could justify your
“ generous professions, by convincing you
“ they are not thrown away upon an un-
“ worthy person ! But I must not : — No ;

“inexorable Fate! I must be conceal-
“ed.”

“I wish not to be intrusted with the
“least article of your life, any further
“than I could be useful to you. But do
“not rate my professions of friendship so
“highly; it certainly cannot be so very
“extraordinary. You may possibly have
“met with some of sordid dispositions—
“you may have (being used to misfor-
“tune) contracted an idea that the world
“is composed of unworthy people: I
“think, however, I could shew you ma-
“ny, who would induce you to change
“your notions. Besides, is it so won-
“derful to meet with unfortunate people
“that we must suppose them guilty?”

“Ah, Madam, your disclaiming praise
“only enhances my admiration and gra-
“titude.—But suffer me to intreat you
“to suspend your judgment; perhaps a
“time may come, when I may be allow-
“ed to explain this seeming mystery;
“and be assured, that my first employ
“shall be to remove any doubts that
“here-

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“ hereafter may arise in your worthy bosom.”

I re-assured her of my being entirely satisfied; and her conscious innocence diffused a calm content over her features.

Miss Lewen (the name she has assumed) walked part of the way home with me. We parted, mutually sorry at the separation. Soon after she left me, I perceived Mr. Montague. He came, he told me, to meet and conduct me home. “ I have, besides my care for you,” said he, “ a little kind of curiosity to know something about your pretty recluse. “ Deem me not impertinent, but I think “ I could gather from your discourse, “ that the Lady is not in the most eligible “ situation. If you could find out the “ means to make me of service to her, “ you would confer a lasting obligation “ on me.”

I informed him, in brief, of all I knew. I would not hazard any conjecture of my own. While I was speaking, little *Fidelle*, with whom I had become a favourite,

came bounding over the lawn. He ran up to me, when, looking at Mr. Montague, seemed pleased with him, and, wagging his tail, rubbed his back against him: Mr. Montague looked attentively at the dog, as if he was no stranger to him. "From whence did this come?" asked he. I told him he belonged to Miss Lewen, who would be unhappy at missing him, as she prized him as invaluable. To the dog's blue ribbon hung a little silver padlock, with G. L. in a cypher; which I should not have observed, if Mr. Montague had not pointed it out to me. A farming man presently came up, who, calling *Fidelle*, he skipped away from us, leaving us to pursue our way home.

I THINK, my love, I shall make *you* happy, by telling you, *I* am more so than I was. Miss Denby behaves with great propriety to her destined husband. My only wish was to see his felicity secured; the means, by which that is accomplished, I think trivial.

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I have striven, with all my power, to tear his image from my heart; but that, I am convinced, can never be effected till I can place a worthier there:—and where is that worthier to be found?

No, Emily, my resolution is fixed.—Urge me not then to marry. I will never marry unless I can give my whole undivided heart to my husband.—It would not be honest.—I therefore devote my life to celibacy. If you please, you may call it a punishment, which I inflict on myself for being so far guilty as to suffer my affection to be criminally engaged; for harsh as that word sounds, I fear my partiality for a man so near so sacred an engagement must be thus stiled.—Ah! my dear Emily! my fatal unhappy passion, in the eye of rectitude, will admit of no extenuating—no qualifying terms. A love, which is founded in reason or hope, may, from a thousand accidents, be diminished or suppressed: but, as I love without reason, reason can assume no sway.—It is the child of nature.—Reason, prudence, hope—all is against me.

Yet,

Yet, self-condemned as I am, I would not wish to divest myself of my feelings. I esteem worth, benevolence of heart, manly virtue, and every qualification that can do honour to human nature ; in Mr. Montague I find them united. Shall I esteem them less, because I find them connected with a man, whose outside can be only equalled by such virtues ? Surely not. —

But, with these prepossessions, could I be justified in bestowing my hand on any man ? No ; the marriage vow is too sacred to be thus violated. I do not mean to insinuate, by my praises of Mr. Montague, that no other man is equally amiable ; but I am not affected by the inestimable worth of any other, as I am with his — therefore I should be highly blameable, I should be wicked, ever to consent to being united to any man.

The country air, and gentle exercise, has been extremely beneficial to me. I begin to recover my usual looks. Indeed, I believe, it is, in some measure, owing
to

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to my great endeavours, and my fixed resolution never to marry.

My dear father has been very unhappy about me.—Good God! what am I, to give pain to such a reverend bosom! But I hope what I said to him will make him easy. Yet, can I acquit myself of some deceit? I fear not.—Heaven pardon me! —I hope my motive was not illaudable, as it was merely to give ease to the breast of my father.

Mr. Menil deserves my greatest thanks; he has never behaved to me with the least particularity. Is there not a pleasing delicacy in his conduct?

My beloved Emily! you have not wrote to me some time. Delay not your entertaining and instructive letters. Weak as I am, how much do I stand in need of your counsel and advice!

May I not hope, that when the hurry of Miss Denby's wedding is over, that Mr. Herbert will spare you to me? O! plead with him, my dearest friend; and bless, with your loved society, your faithful

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XXX.

To Miss LASCELLES.

Woodley-Park, June 20.

WHAT could possess you, Bab, to write me such a letter? Or rather what could possess me to give you reason for it? Is your intelligence true?—But why do I ask? It is, it must be true; and I am certainly undone.—Devilish girl! How could you paint such a scene? I in love with Montague! Forbid it, Heaven! What, did he dare think to make me subservient to his vile abominable schemes?—My pride—my spirit takes the alarm.—Something must be done—and speedily too—for at present, my promise stands to marry him the week after next. I must and will contrive to quarrel with him—to gain time.

I have seen Hilton several times, the man is almost distracted at the thoughts of the dreadful state I shall soon be reduced to. He tells me Lady Chester
is

is to be my guest—my governess I suppose—for some months. I told him, Montague had not mentioned such a thing to me; that was his artifice, he said, he would not mention it, till it was out of my power to object.—Out of my power! Am I then to be guided and documented as they please to direct?—No, no, they are mistaken in Harriet Denby.

That simpleton, Louisa, has picked up an acquaintance in the cottages about here. Some mistress of her brother's perhaps. I gave a hint that she was some adventurer, and got finely reprimanded. Upon my life! they think they can do any thing with me.

* * *

NEXT week the races begin. I shall exhibit myself in colours for the first time. The balls they tell me are brilliant. So I shall figure away in my jewels upon the occasion. I think that week may produce some critical event. Yet I will not be too sanguine.

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I never was more out of humour in my life. I have too great regard for you, to vent my spleen on you; therefore I had better lay aside my pen, since I cannot divest myself of my fit of crossness.

Your's, sincerely,

HARRIET DENBY.

LETTER XXXI.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-Park, June 23.

I HAVE lost my little friend Miss Lewen. If the advantage was not so eminently on her side, I should extremely regret her departure; constantly spending some part of the day with her had so endeared her company to me.

This morning I received a letter from her; for your entertainment I will inclose it. I hope she will be happy. Her turn of fortune was very unexpected. But I will not delay your receiving pleasure from the account.

To

To Miss SOMERVILLE.

SO great are my obligations to you, Madam, that I think I can no other way repay them, than by assuring you, your kind generous wishes for my happiness are fully answered. When such merit and loveliness became interested in my welfare, Heaven heard my petitions.

But how imperfect is our felicity on earth! Mine, great as it is, meets with an alloy. Nor can the Almighty accuse me of unthankfulness to his bounty, since I must be guilty of the most flagrant ingratitude, were I not to feel a sorrow at leaving you behind me.

Your unexampled goodness to an unfortunate unknown. — But what am I doing? I shall, I am apprehensive, incur your displeasure. Let my heart then be the repository of my grateful remembrances.

Yesterday, Madam, I received the following notice from my banker in London; the only person intrusted with my retreat.

But with pleasure I recollect, that I
once

once promised you some account of myself when in my power ; that time is come as far as relates to myself. I know you to have the goodness to excuse my naming persons, with whose prudent sentiments I am not acquainted. Absence may have weakened the attachment of the most amiable of men ; if so—only in my wretched bosom shall his name be remembered.

My father, one of the most worthy beings that ever adorned human nature, was a clergyman. He had unfortunately, by a too precipitate marriage, deprived himself of the favour of his friends, —relations I should have said—the other appellation they merited not.

Long struggling with inconceivable distress, accumulated by beholding a beloved wife and child in want of almost every comfort of life ; for a genteel stipend he became travelling tutor to a young nobleman. The father of his pupil made large promises ; which, if in his intention ever to fulfil, he was prevented by death before my father returned to England.

On

On the news of Lord G.'s death his son hastened his return : but prevailed on my father to stay abroad as he was but just recovering from a severe fit of illness, and unable to travel post ; and because he had the offer of continuing in the same office with Mr. L. a gentleman with whom he had contracted a strict friendship.

The appointment he was to receive with this gentleman was infinitely short of that from his Lordship ; but his late pupil was so generous as to continue to him his salary, besides making him a handsome present when they parted.

With Mr. L. my father staid near two years ; and never, during that period, saw any thing in his pupil's conduct he could have wished altered ; on the contrary, I have heard my father declare, he thought himself edified by the company of so exemplary a young man. His virtues were truly innate. Yet, he had all the high spirits which the shameless libertines of this age affect, and which

which can only be the result of a good heart and sound constitution.

The news of the death of my dear mother, which happened suddenly, (when I was about fifteen) brought my father over. Half distracted with grief, he sought some relief in the society of Lord G. He did all in his power to console my poor father for his heavy affliction.—Mine too scarcely knew any bounds. But time reconciles us to events, which will admit of no other resource; and our little home became comfortable and pleasant to us.

Lord G. frequently paid visits to his old tutor, and never failed loading us with presents.—Grateful as my father was for the benefits he received, yet he would gladly have received much less, and been certain of the continuance: for though he had the highest idea of the rectitude of Lord G's principles, yet the precariousness of his income, and the knowledge that few can answer for their own intentions, prevented him from tast-

ing that content he would otherwise have enjoyed.

My father was extremely shocked to hear, that Mr. L. his agreeable pupil abroad, had lost his father. Not that his death, merely considered, could be called one, but from the circumstances of it,—it being believed he found some method of dispatching himself—and the dreadful confusion in which he left his affairs.

His estate had been a noble one; he likewise had married a lady of good fortune; but by wheedling and threatening by turns, had prevailed on her to give up the settlements to him; by which step it soon followed his estate, except five thousand pounds so secured that he could not reach it.

“He not only ran into every excess of extravagance, but gamed immoderately. What fortune can support prodigality of this sort?

A brother of his late wife’s—for soon her death was accomplished by ill usage and other distresses—was as ready to
pur-

purchase as ever this infatuated man was to sell. By advancing prompt payment, he soon became proprietor of all Mr. L's estates; who, instead of endeavouring by frugal methods to retrieve his distracted affairs, sunk into a state of despair. Remorse, and the never failing stings of a wounded conscience, as I before said, made him precipitate his death.

Mr. L. who now saw himself reduced from his just expectations of possessing several thousands a year, to a very narrow fortune, and incapable of improving it, was received by his uncle with great cordiality; though he never failed to let him see, that he thought he was conferring a great obligation, in permitting his nephew to have the run of that house, which was once his own.

* I was growing up towards woman, and my lord no longer addressed me in the stile used to young girls, when he happened to be alone with me, which however was very seldom, but before my father he generally used the appellation of the child. I could not avoid making

the observation, though it appeared a matter of so little consequence that I never attended to it.

His behaviour to my father was uniformly good, that I am certain there was in his breast no distinction of tenderness between Lord G. and me. To the extreme tenderness my father possessed for him, must be owing the dreadful effects the discovery of his baseness occasioned. The vile Lord G. wanted to insinuate himself into my young heart; but so artless was I, as not to understand the full extent of his meaning, couched as his expressions were in ambiguous terms; and he was not yet hardened villain enough openly to declare his intentions.

About this time I was addressed by a gentleman of an estate of three hundred a year. There was nothing remarkable in his person or manner, but my father was happy at the prospect of seeing me provided for before his death, which from ill health was but too likely to happen soon. He made many inquiries

after his character, and received satisfactory answers.

I paid so implicit a duty to the will of my father, that I hardly thought it possible to dissent from his opinion: and though I had not the least partiality for Mr. Medway, more than I felt for every other individual, yet I hoped in time I should like him well enough to perform my duty with the same cheerfulness I had ever used to my father. He was not however a favourite with Lord G: he behaved to him, when they chanced to meet, with a forced kind of civility; and, notwithstanding he could alledge nothing against Mr. Medway to ground his objections on, yet he ceased not to dissuade my father from marrying me to him. When my father pressed to know his reasons, he would answer, "that he thought it was too soon for me
 "to marry, being not yet seventeen;
 "and that it was more than probable I
 "might meet with better offers, if I
 "waited."

My father said, "I was certainly
 younger

“ younger than he would have chosen
 “ for me to enter into such engagements ;
 “ but circumstanced as we were, it was
 “ the happiest establishment for me :
 “ and as to the match not being so good
 “ a one as I might hereafter meet with,
 “ he hoped, I had not so little profited
 “ by his instructions as to place happi-
 “ ness in wealth ; and that he had much
 “ rather I should marry a man of mid-
 “ dling fortune, than be despised by the
 “ rich relations of my husband.”

My lord one day asked me, “ If I
 “ really loved Mr. Medway ? or if I
 “ consented merely out of respect to my
 “ father ? ” I told him, “ I had so
 “ high a veneration for my father’s judg-
 “ ment and wishes for my happiness,
 “ that I was convinced he would never
 “ have permitted me to receive the ad-
 “ dresses of Mr. Medway, unless assured
 “ that my felicity would be the conse-
 “ quence. As to loving Mr. Medway,
 “ I hardly knew how to answer such a
 “ question. I believed him to be a wor-
 “ thy man, and as such I certainly
 M 2 “ esteemed

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“esteemed him. Perhaps I might not feel
 “a romantic kind of passion for him;
 “but, as my heart was wholly free from
 “every other attachment, I had not a
 “doubt but that he would soon become
 “very dear to me.”

He appeared dissatisfied with what I
 had said. “Did you indeed then never
 “feel any attachment for any man?”

“No, my lord, never.”

“What!” cried he, catching and pressing my hand, “did you never receive
 “pleasure from the praises of the men?”

“The just commendations of my
 “friends, my lord, not only give me
 “pleasure, but incite me to deserve them
 “still more.”

“Fanny, you do not, or will not understand me.”

“What would your lordship have me
 “understand?”

“I know not: but I wish you happier
 “than I fear Medway will make you.”

I must own, that Lord G.’s behaviour
 to me, if it did not create a degree of
 partiality towards him; yet made me rather

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ther uneasy. I could almost have wished my father not so interested in this union, though I knew not why he should not be so. I had always considered Lord G. as the patron of my family; as such, I revered his character; but the particularity of his conduct to me was a mystery I could not solve; neither could I give a name to those sensations with which I was seized when he pressed my hand so earnestly.

Mr. Medway prevailed on my father to take me up to London to purchase cloaths, and other requisites, on the approach of my nuptials. Lord G. offered us an apartment in his house, which my father, however, politely declined. We went into very small lodgings; but as it was but for a little time the inconvenience was trifling. A day was set for our wedding; and my father's joy was inexpressible on the occasion. Mr. L. on hearing we were in town, inquired and found us out. My father was extremely happy to see him, and begged he would, as much as possible, favour us with his company while in town.

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The day before that set a-part for the solemnization of the wedding, Mr. Medway, on quitting the room, accidentally dropped a letter. My father, who was alone, picked it up, and was going to call to him, when, perceiving the hand to be Lord G's, it created in him some curiosity to know what could induce that nobleman to correspond with his destined son-in-law.

I was in my own chamber, from which I was hurried by hearing something fall ; I ran into the next room, I found my beloved father on the ground, and as I thought dead. I skrieked, and brought somebody by my cries from below. By applying proper remedies he soon recovered. When he had quite regained his senses, he begged the people to leave him. I pressed his cold hand between mine, and bathing it with tears, intreated to know the cause of the alarming situation I had beheld him in. " O that villain !" shaking his head. Knowing he had just parted with Medway, my suspicions instantly fell upon him :

him: "Can Mr. Medway be a villain?" and relying upon the many professions Lord G. had lately made me, added, "If he is Lord G. will call him to account."

"Lord G!" exclaimed my father wildly: "Lord G!—It is he.—He who has stabbed your father to the heart.—Curse!—But Almighty Heaven pardon me! I—will be calm." "But," cried he, wiping his eyes, "read this," presenting me an open letter. "Read this, and join with me, in praising Heaven that the unexampled villainy of those infernal wretches was so timely discovered."

Even thus prepared, nothing could equal my astonishment when I read as follows:

"Either the heart of Fanny is uncommonly cold, or your cursed ugly face has made some impression on her, for all my efforts to gain admittance into her breast have failed. But, nevertheless, mine she must and shall be. Your scheme, Medway, of carrying—

“ rying her the same day out of town
“ will never do. The old fellow will
“ certainly attend his darling, and then
“ it will be impossible for me to form
“ a pretence of appearing, as I am
“ known not to be a friend to the
“ match. Faith! you topped your part
“ finely; the devil could not have dis-
“ covered that we ever had been inti-
“ mately acquainted.

“ Remember when you retire for the
“ night, you must insist on a dark room;
“ nay, the delicacy of Fanny I think
“ should rather propose it. I shall be
“ in readiness to take your place. Yet
“ I shall fancy my joys incomplete ’till
“ she knows whose caresses she receives;
“ but I must not risk the discovery till
“ you have got her down to Westly-
“ farm: then will I appear to her in
“ *propria persona*. I hope she will be
“ soon reconciled to her lot, when she is
“ convinced, that you in reality cannot
“ be her husband, since you have been
“ some time married to another. Your
“ money shall be paid you the morning
“ after

“after I am put in possession of my
 “little destined prey. Your releases
 “are ready to be signed. You think
 “me generous, but I would part with
 “three times as much to gain my wishes.
 “Adieu, and believe me your faithful
 “friend,

“G.—”

The instant I perused this horrid letter, I fell on my knees and returned thanks to God for this blessed escape. I then begged to know what my father proposed doing. “I know not” said he. And after a pause: “Let a chair be
 “called—I will go and upbraid this vile
 “destroyer of my peace.”

“Not so, my dearest father; thank
 “Heaven he cannot be called the *de-*
 “*stroyer of your peace.* Your Fanny is
 “left you innocent, and happy if she
 “could behold her father smile.”

“O! Fanny!” cried he, bursting into tears, “I have received my death’s
 “wound: it is here, it is here,” striking his breast.

Fain would I have persuaded him to

stay with me, but he would go. In about an hour he returned with a visible alteration in his looks.—“Put me to bed, Fanny,” said he, “put me to bed, from whence I shall never, I hope, rise again.”

“My father, my dear father, is this the resignation you have so often told me was necessary to the dispensations of Providence? O! let religion arm you to bear this disappointment.”

“No, no;” said he, shaking his head, “it is too much.—This is too much. Base villain! Couldst thou think I would sell my child? How have I been deceived by thy false pretences!”

By the assistance of the mistress of the house I got my poor father to bed. A stranger to the town and inhabitants, I knew not to whom to apply for any advice, which I judged absolutely requisite for the restoration of my father's health. I knew no one in the place but those two villains to whom all my distress and affliction was owing; when
Hea-

Heaven directed, I cast my eyes on a ticket left by Mr. L. with his address. Instantly the thought of applying to him started into my mind : as hastily I put it in practice. I took a coach, and drove to his lodgings.

Had I given myself time for reflection, perhaps the delicacy of my sex might have presented obstacles, but it was the result of the moment. I requested to be shewed to him. The moment I saw him, I would have given the world I had wrote instead of coming myself. I could not speak. A flood of tears, perhaps, preserved me from fainting. He looked on me with an air of deep concern, blended with curiosity.—Tenderly taking my hand, and leading me to a chair, he intreated me to be composed. I gained a voice, and its first use was to tell him who I was.

“ My name, Sir, is Neville. I am the
 “ daughter of your old friend and tutor.
 “ My father—I need not tell you his
 “ virtues.—How have they been re-
 “ paid!—My dear father lies dying

“ of a broken heart. If compassion can
“ move.”—

—“ O! let us fly this moment to
“ him. How shall I ever repay your
“ goodness in thus distinguishing me!”
Without staying to console me, he put
me into the coach, and attended me to
the scene of woe I had just left.

My unhappy father lay without sense,
his eyes fixed on the wainscot, cold as
ice—his pulse hardly beating.

Mr. L. sent for a surgeon, who bled
my father, and prescribed for him; but,
as he said, the blow was struck, and all
human help was vain. He kindly ac-
knowledged Mr. L's care and attention
of him, and told us in part, the result of
his visit to the abandoned Lord G.
When the vile wretch was convinced he
was fully detected, he made no scruple
to avow his wicked intentions, made
my father the most splendid offers if he
would resign me to him, and swore
he could not live without me. On my
father's treating his infamous proposal
with the contempt it deserved, he basely
told

told him, "that he believed there were
 "some accounts to settle between them;
 "and that he should certainly give his
 "attorney orders about them."

My father said, "he knew those gifts
 "to be voluntary, though he found,
 "they were now destined for the vilest
 "of purposes."

"See," said the wretch, "how that
 "plea will influence council by and by.
 "You had better comply with my terms,
 "or I shall certainly provide you with
 "ready-furnished lodgings soon."

"Soon," replied my father, "it
 "must be. If it is not, another may
 "have provided lodgings for me, in a
 "house which you can never enter."

Mr. L. used every art in his power
 to console my heart-broken-parent. Every
 argument to reconcile him to the idea of
 life; but in vain were all his endea-
 vours. All my grief, all my silent elo-
 quence, in vain.

Just before my unhappy father
 breathed his last, he said, earnestly look-
 ing

ing at Mr. L. ; “ I have been so cruelly,
 “ deceived, that I scarce know how to
 “ trust any man : but let me intreat of
 “ you not to deceive me. You have be-
 “ haved with so much kindness to me in
 “ my affliction, that I must hope the
 “ heart is good which can have sug-
 “ gested such generous actions. Your
 “ tendernefs and care for me is in vain ;
 “ but there is one, who will soon stand
 “ in need of the utmost, to enable her
 “ to support the heaviest affliction she
 “ has yet known. O ! that I could find
 “ a friend for her ! young and unex-
 “ perienced, how will she be able to
 “ resist the snares of the alluring world ?
 “ O ! that my heart had been stout
 “ enough to have sustained life, ’till I
 “ had seen her provided for !” The tears
 which accompanied my dear father’s
 words, plainly evinced the deep distress
 which overwhelmed his soul. I was in
 such agonies that I could scarcely attend
 to any thing, but I found Mr. L. hardly
 less affected than myself. He threw him-
 self on his knees by the bed-side, and
 pref-

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pressing my dying father's hand; "My
" tutor! my monitor! confide in your
" faithful L. Never, no never shall his
" heart know deceit. With my life
" will I defend your dear Fanny from
" every ill; and believe me when I
" swear I shall think it the most agree-
" able part of my existence, as well as
" the most useful, when I can give any
" proofs how dear your memory will
" ever be to me."

" If," cried my father, lifting up his
eyes to heaven, " if, O my God! I am
" deceived in the professions of this
" young man, impute not the error to
" me, but to the seeming sincerity of
" his *professions*! Come hither, my child.
" —Receive this gentleman for your
" guardian.—Take his advice in every
" thing that has virtue for its base or
" object; but, if ever he should counsel
" you to ill—if he should seek to lead
" you in the flowery labyrinth of vice,
" shun him—fly him; and may the
" curses of a dying father follow him!"

" May Heaven renounce me!" cried
Mr.

Mr. L. “ if ever I give Miss Neville
 “ cause to repent the confidence you wish
 “ her to place in me !”

“ May Heaven,” repeated my father,
 “ do to you as you acquit yourself to
 “ my dying bequest !—God for ever
 “ bless you while you both continue de-
 “ serving of his blessings !”

We received his dying benediction on
 our knees ; and soon after performed the
 melancholy office of closing the eyes of
 my beloved venerable parent.

The day after my heavy loss, which
 I ceased not to deplore, Lord G. came
 into the room. I started with horror at
 the sight of him. “ I am come,” said he,
 “ to enquire after your health, having
 “ heard nothing from your father for
 “ some days. I need not tell you, I
 “ suppose, that he discovered my attach-
 “ ment to you, nor can you, I think,
 “ have been ignorant of it, since it has
 “ been very apparent for some time past. I
 “ meditated perhaps an unjustifiable step
 “ to put you in my power ; *that* you
 “ should ever have found exerted in your
 “ fa-

“favour. My fortune, my dearest Fanny, shall be at your disposal ; and as to what the world will say or think, it ought to be a trifle with you, when set in competition with making the man happy who adores you : nay, it will be mentioned as rather a meritorious act in you, as being grateful enough to repay the obligations I have bestowed on your family.—You hesitate, my love ;—be not afraid to speak your sentiments to your lover, your friend, and protector.”—

“If I hesitated, my lord,” answered I with firmness,—“it proceeded not from my being afraid to speak my sentiments, but from astonishment that sealed my lips ; for, though unfortunately I have learned your lordship is capable of the blackest crimes and deceit, I yet am surprized at your flagrant breach of every virtue, both human and divine, in daring to shock the ears of innocence with your infamous proposal. But, my lord, I condescend not to argue with you : need-
“less

“needless would be my task! Yet one
 “I can offer”—continued I, melting
 into tears—“an unanswerable one. Look
 “here, my lord!”—opening the door
 of my father’s chamber, and shewing
 the beloved corpse,—“look on the
 “victim of your cruelty. See that pale
 “corse of my dear departed father, op-
 “posed to the gaudy scenes you have
 “often described, and now want me to
 “partake of. How does all your gay
 “sophistry sink against such an oppo-
 “nent! Well may you be shocked at
 “the only answer I will ever make to your
 “base advances.”

“Fanny, my dear Fanny! permit me
 “to lead you from this dreadful scene.
 “Trust to my honour. By Heaven I
 “will never do you any injury! Do
 “but place yourself under my protec-
 “tion, and allow me to wait on you to
 “my house, or other lodgings.”

My indignation was too great to per-
 mit me to reply to him: I only looked
 steadily at him, which look was expres-
 sive of the sentiments I entertained for
 him.

him. Then casting my eyes on the body, my rising sighs and tears gave some relief to my overcharged heart. I knelt down, and fervently addressed myself to the departed saint, “to watch over my
“tender years, and to strengthen my
“virtue against the insidious betrayer,
“who had caused his death.”

Lord G. was moved with the agony of my petition. He intreated me to be composed, and begged of me to receive some assistance from him. I peremptorily refused any thing from him, but his absence, which I told him would confer a sensible pleasure on me, as sorrows like mine were best left to themselves. “Would I allow him to call another
“time?” “Not with my consent,” I answered. “But if he would persist in
“insulting me with his presence, which
“must needs be obnoxious to me, as I
“could but consider him as the murderer
“of my father, I foresaw not how I
“was to prevent him any more than I
“had done.”

“It would be his happiness to be ser-
“vice-

"viceable to me," he said, and took his leave.

In the afternoon Mr. L. came to mingle his griefs with mine.

On my informing him of the visit of Lord G. he thought it most advisable to remove me to a place of greater safety. He took upon himself the whole charge of the funeral, &c. and after putting my father's affairs in some order, acquainted me, there was about five hundred pounds left for me; I am apprehensive I was indebted to his generosity for part of that sum.

Mr. L. placed me in lodgings and board at a farm-house in the country, about three miles from his uncle's house. He frequently visited me; and our intercourse created in us a mutual attachment, and we almost imperceptibly found ourselves acquainted with each other's sentiments. But with this pleasing knowledge we were determined to rest, as it was wholly unreasonable to hope Mr. L's uncle, whose passion was riches, would ever consent to our union.

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A few words, madam, will end this tedious history. My retreat was discovered, and the uncle of Mr. L. came to me, and loaded me with the most opprobrious language. He would not believe me innocent of the blackest of crimes, unless I would swear to quit this place, and never acquaint Mr. L. of my residence; if I continued any correspondence with him, he would leave him to beggary. I made no scruple, hard as were the terms, to screen Mr. L. from the anger of his uncle. I fled to the retreat in which you, madam, found me.

My banker, as I mentioned before, was the only person intrusted with my secret; and has been faithful to his trust, though applications were made to him by a most noble-minded man, the dear friend of Mr. L.

Yesterday he apprized me of a will made in my favour, by a relation of my father's, who resided in France. The sum, ten thousand pounds, has been remitted to him.

My joy on this occasion cannot be expressed.

pressed. I propose setting out this day for London to receive further particulars, and to advise with my friend how to act.

Hope, which has ever cheered my drooping heart, does not now forsake me; yet, if my pleasing dreams of still finding Mr. L. constant should prove delusive.—But I will not give way to so sad a thought.

Adieu! Madam. Those pleasing hours I have spent in your company, will ever be gratefully remembered by

Your ever obliged,

FRANCES NEVILLE.

DO you not rejoice with me, my dear Emily, that the amiable Miss Neville will so soon see an end to her misfortunes? How very few females, at her tender age, would have acted in her exemplary manner! May the worthy Mr. L. soon reward her sufferings!

Lord Hilton has been down sometime at Sir William Freeman's.—He brought him to visit us last week.

He

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He said he should soon go down to Farm-Leigh, and asked Miss Denby, if she had any commands to her friend. She thanked his lordship, and would trouble him with a letter. Upon the whole, her conduct was not in the least prehensible.

Yet still I do not think Mr. Montague's mind is entirely at ease: but perhaps ease is incompatible at all times with a fervent passion. Indeed we too frequently find the fatal prediction of Milton verified. Too seldom do we meet those kindred souls united in marriage. Love is equally productive of happiness and misery, and both must be in extremes. Yet, Emily! does not the misery preponderate? I fear it does: and am apprehensive that Tasso was but too fatally convinced of the truth of his assertion, when he says,

“Sighs are his incense, his libation tears.”
At least I have found these the only offerings. Cruel Deity!

Did I tell you Mr. Montague left us for three days? He went upon some

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urgent business to London:—Relative to his approaching marriage I imagine. Ah! how painful appeared his absence! Think, however, I must accustom myself soon to a final one. The time draws near, when I shall no longer behold him. No longer listen to the soft melody of his accents; or, delighted hear “truths” come mended from his tongue. No more pass those pleasing social days, when his instructive conversation, “the stealing hours secure, and mark’d them down for wisdom.” No, my Emily! I must resign every enjoyment I have at present a relish for. Resign! Alas! I had never any right to indulge them.

Adieu, my dearest Emily! May you never entertain a passion which your heart condemns!

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

End of VOL. I.



